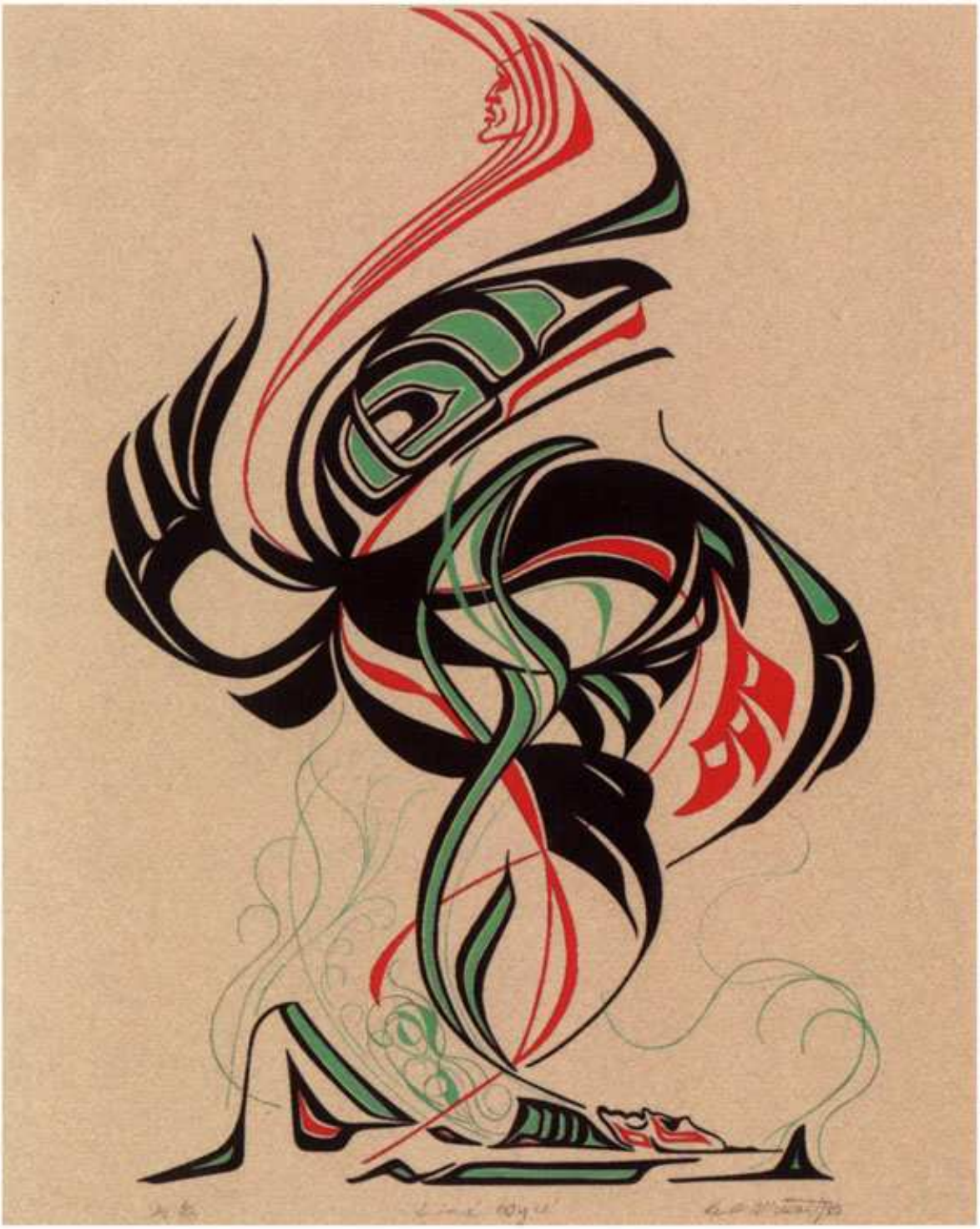
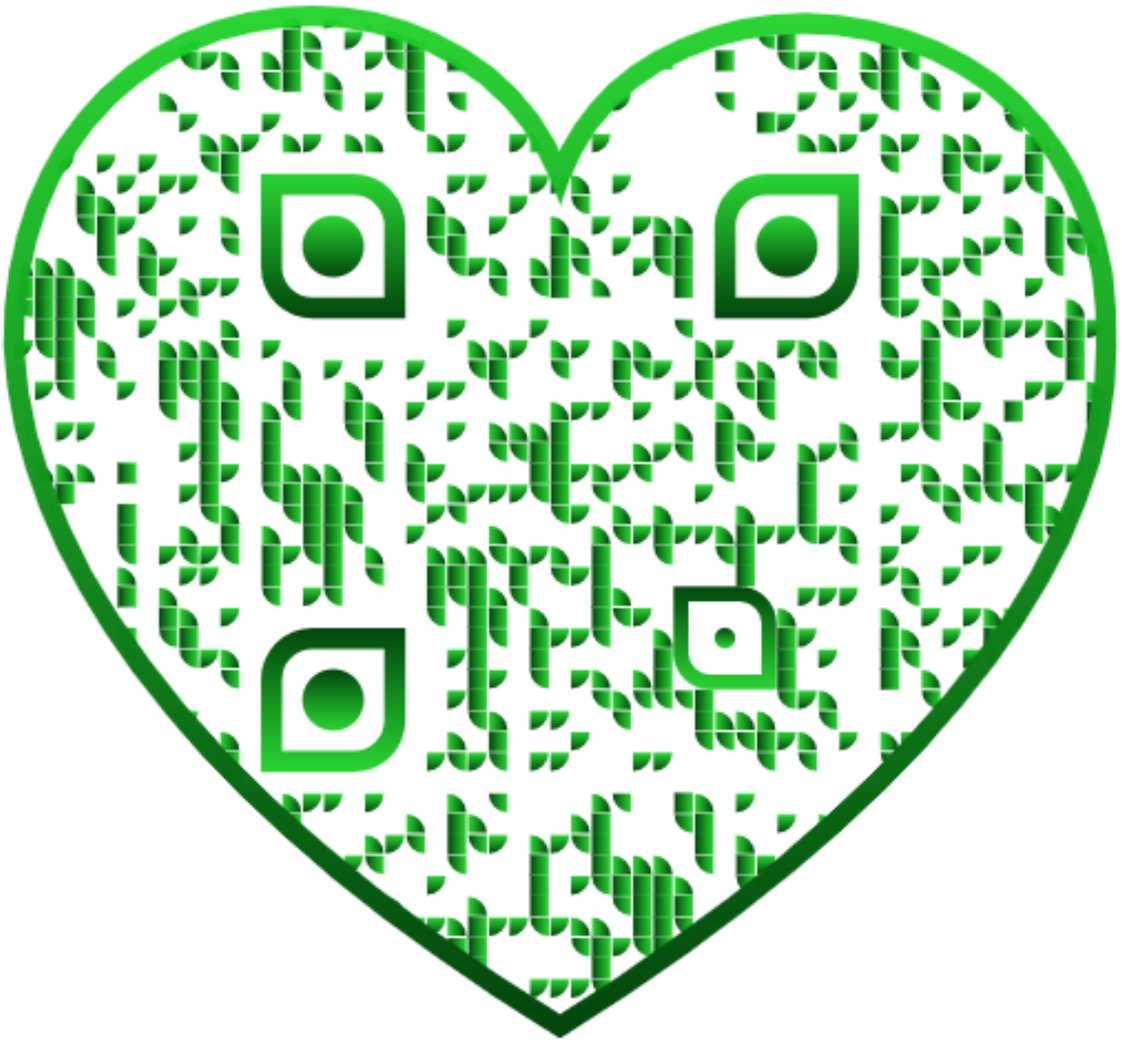
Amerindian Rebirth

REINCARNATION BELIEF AMONG NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS AND INUIT



Edited by Antonia Mills and Richard Slobodin



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Reincarnation Belief among North American Indians and Inuit

Until now few people have been aware of the prevalence of belief in some form of rebirth or reincarnation among North American native peoples. This collection of essays by anthropologists and one psychiatrist examines this concept among native American societies, from near the time of contact until the present day.

Amerindian Rebirth opens with a foreword by Gananath Obeyesekere that contrasts North American and Hindu/Buddhist/Jain beliefs. The introduction gives an overview, and the first chapter summarizes the context, distribution, and variety of recorded belief. All the papers chronicle some aspect of rebirth belief in a number of different cultures. Essays cover such topics as seventeenth-century Huron eschatology, Winnebago ideology, varying forms of Inuit belief, and concepts of rebirth found among subarctic natives and Northwest Coast peoples. The closing chapters address the genesis and anthropological study of Amerindian reincarnation. In addition, the possibility of evidence for the actuality of rebirth is addressed. *Amerindian Rebirth* will further our understanding of concepts of self-identity, kinship, religion, cosmology, resiliency, and change among native North American peoples.

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Amerindian Rebirth: Reincarnation Belief among North American Indians and Inuit

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Preface

This collection of essays developed out of a session on Native North American reincarnation beliefs at the May, 1990, annual meeting of the Canadian Anthropology Society / Société Canadienne d'Anthropologie (CASCA). The session was organized by Antonia Mills; other participants were Edith Turner, Jean-Guy Goulet, Lee Guemple, and Richard Slobodin. In November 1991 James G. Matlock organized a session on reincarnation for the American Anthropological Association meetings held in Chicago, where Michael Harkin first presented his essay.

When we decided to attempt a volume of essays on the topic, there was a gratifying response from other anthropologists interested in the subject. Besides papers by the participants in the CASCA meeting, included are other essays written for this volume by James Matlock, Mark Nuttall, and Alexander von Gernet, as well as material previously published by Paul Radin. The chapter by Bernard Saladin d'Anglure is a translation and condensation of an article originally published in French. Richard Slobodin has added Afterthoughts to his article of 1970, and Ian Stevenson has added Afterthoughts to his article of 1966. Marie Mauzé has expanded an essay originally presented at the American Anthropological Association meetings in 1988.

Antonia Mills
Richard Slobodin

GANANATH OBEYESEKERE

Foreword: Reincarnation Eschatologies and the Comparative Study of Religions

The collection of essays in this volume is in my view an important event for those of us interested in the comparative study of religion, irrespective of our disciplinary fields. The scholarly work on reincarnation assembled here focuses on Amerindian religions, but the authors are fully aware of their world-wide distribution, especially among indigenous populations of Australia, in Eastern Siberia, parts of Melanesia (Trobriand being the classic case), and Africa, primarily West Africa. One hopes that in the future we will have similar scholarly collections for the aforementioned areas also.

The reasons for the scholarly neglect of reincarnation eschatologies are not very difficult to figure out. Western fieldworkers simply were not attuned to it. Sure enough, early Africanist ethnographers and theoreticians like Nadel and Radcliffe-Brown recognized their existence, but not their existential significance, nor their centrality in the cosmologies of African peoples.[1] As Alexander von Gernet points out it is inevitable that early missionaries were unsympathetic to indigenous eschatological conceptions and often retranslated these beliefs in terms of their own (chapter 3). In general, ethnographers were expectably sensitive to eschatologies that paralleled their own, as with the Dinka (Lienhardt 1961) or the Nuer (Evans-Pritchard 1940); or with beliefs that could be brought in line with Western thought – the classic case being that of the Azande (Evans-Pritchard 1976 [1937]). This simply does not work with reincarnation, however. Malinowski described a reincarnation cosmology among the Trobriand and identified it as such; but he did not see its family resemblance to reincarnation elsewhere and to well-known Indic theories. In some instances it is likely that such beliefs were encapsulated in globalizing labels such as polytheism and pantheism. This is easy to do because reincarnation can coexist with forms of

monotheism (Druze) or with any-theism as Guemple shows in respect of Nulialuq, the major deity of the Qiqiqtamiut Inuit (chapter 7). Nevertheless, though reincarnation beliefs are enshrined in a larger cosmological order, they possess an inescapable logic of their own, as I shall demonstrate in the following discussion.

Part 1

It is no longer possible to depict with any certainty the forms and features of reincarnation beliefs as they existed prior to Western contact and the introduction of Christianity. The adoption of Christianity and other monotheisms has everywhere complicated the picture, as the authors of this volume document. Slobodin shows that nowadays there are only a few instances of reincarnation among the Kutchin but this need not have been the case in pre-contact times. Slobodin's own vivid case histories suggest the power of these beliefs even with the supervention of Christianity (chapter 9). I think one has no choice but to depict the ongoing contemporary cultural significance of these beliefs and, however imperfectly, from whatever sources available, reconstruct their prior constellations. This applies not only for the American Indian cultures presented in this collection but also for other places where similar beliefs flourish or have flourished. This book plausibly argues that these beliefs were not only central to Inuit and Northwest Coast Indians but also had a widespread dispersal among American Indians in general. The relevant data are masterfully presented in Mills's essay on the distribution and varieties of reincarnation beliefs (chapter 2). If similar studies are carried out among African, Australian, and Melanesian groups (not to mention ancient Europeans like Pythagoras and the Orphic mysteries), we will come to possess a vastly enhanced knowledge of religious beliefs that will in turn alter our present world-picture of comparative religion.

From the point of view of Indic religions the implications of this growing scholarship are, to say the least, revolutionary in significance. Why so? Almost all Indological scholarship has taken for granted that India was the home and ground of rebirth theories, and that Buddhism, Jainism, and post-Upanishadic Hinduism exemplify its most creative expressions. All these theories are inescapably locked into *karma* or the belief that rebirth is related to ethical compensation – reward and punishments; to a cyclical conception of continuity known generally as *samsāra;* and to a notion of an escape from this inexorable cycle into *nirvāna* or *moksha,* the Indic word for 'salvation.' The present evidence

forces us to see the central feature of Indic religion – its doctrine of rebirth or reincarnation – as one species among a larger genus, or one form of life among others exhibiting 'family resemblances' that can be described, isolated, and analysed. Mills and Slobodin have hinted as much; and Edith Turner noting the possibility for a human soul to be reincarnated as an animal among the Inuit (Eskimo) adds: 'this whole field of interspecies reincarnation calls for some comparative work with the similar Hindu belief of possible demotion to the animal world in the next life' (chapter 5). If so, the present work induces us to decentre Indian religions and squarely face up to the significance of this act of decentring.

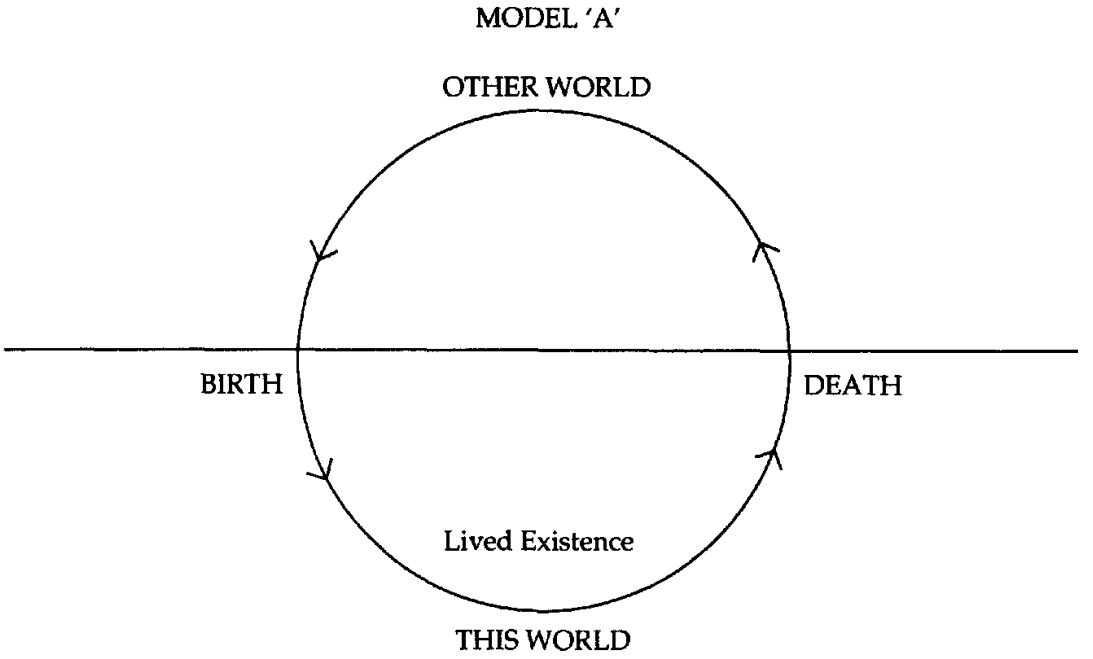
I think one thing is fairly certain: The conventional scholarly strategy of drawing a straight line of development from Vedic to Brahmanic to Upanishadic and then to Buddhist and Jaina thought is increasingly brought into doubt. Such a line of development implies that these ideas were gradually developed by Indic thinkers through a ratiocinative or rational speculation of the sort that characterized the Western philosophical tradition. In the European tradition, especially after Descartes, one can get at true knowledge through rigorous philosophical speculation, and this inevitably included rational justifications for a 'self' as a numinous entity, or spirit, or even soul, that can even lead to a justification for the existence of God. This prejudice can easily be transferred to Indic or any other religion, even though the epistemological postulates of those religions do not warrant the Euro-rationalist assumption. The cross-cultural reincarnation data permit us to question the Euro-rationality that has governed Indic scholarship. Reincarnation theories and cosmologies are found scattered in different parts of the world in small-scale societies, and it is likely, given the comparative world-picture, that they arose in similar societies in India before they were transmuted by the speculative Indo-rationalisms of the subcontinent. The postulated straight line of development is too straight for it to be true; surely there were thousands of belief systems among small groups that never surfaced as written texts. This is impossible to deny, and its implications are that any straight line of *karma* cosmology inferred from the accident of sporadically preserved oral and later written texts by priestly virtuosos (who had their own agendas) is almost certain to be false. Discontinuity – and not continuity – must surely have been the norm in such situations.

What use is the assumption that reincarnation eschatologies of the sort described in this book were also found in India prior to the development of its 'great traditions,' since these purported eschatologies are

no longer extant, and we have no information regarding their content? I think we have no choice but to use the comparative data from non-Indic religions particularly because those data constitute an extraordinary genre exhibiting striking cross-cultural similarities. Fortunately it can be demonstrated that reincarnation beliefs, irrespective of substantive differences, exhibit an inescapable core structure or basic form; or, to put it differently, whatever the differences in reincarnation beliefs world-wide there is a basic logic that underlies them all, and it can be stated in the form of certain propositions.

1 The fundamental idea in reincarnation beliefs is that on the death of an ancestor or close kinsperson he or she is reborn in the human world whether or not there has been an intermediate sojourn in another sphere of existence or in an afterworld. I may die and go to some place of sojourn after death, but eventually I must come down and be reborn in the world I left. Without these conditions there can be no rebirth theory. Metempsychosis or reincarnation without eventual return to the human world does not qualify for inclusion.
2 The motivational basis seems also clear: the dead kinsperson or ancestor has only temporarily left his mortal body; at some point he will come back to the human world because something in him survives and affects continuity. There is a powerful wish or desire to bring the dead kinsperson back into the world of human association.
3 Though the above motivational bases are reasonably clear there are other conditions that overdetermine the prevalence and perpetuation of rebirth/reincarnation eschatologies, most importantly the power and influence attributed to ancestors. Needless to say ancestor cults can exist without rebirth theories, but rebirth theories are strongly associated with them.
4 The motivation to preserve the ancestor must in most instances have its parallel in the concomitant wish to have him in a congenial place, in which case the most obvious is in one's own family or group or in related ones. It would be in the rare case that one would want one's kinsperson to be born among strangers or hostile peoples. If such beliefs are associated with unilineal descent groups, it is likely, though not absolutely necessary, that they will be born in the same clan or lineage. However, rebirth in one's earthly lineage is inevitable where the unilineal principle is especially strong.
5 There is therefore an inescapable structural form associated with any reincarnation belief that postulates an ultimate human rebirth, viz., a

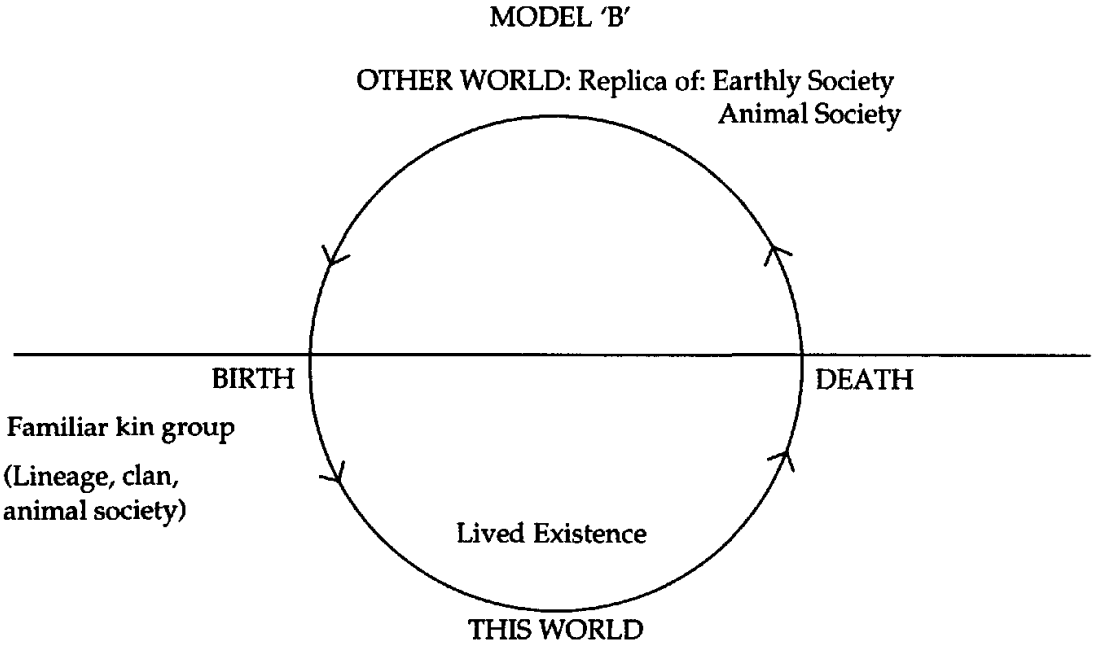
structure of continuity that can for convenience be topographically represented as a cycle, thus:



Without this minimal structure of continuity there can be no rebirth theory. The model sketched above constitutes the basic parameters of any rebirth theory. But in so for as it is an ideal type, it is nowhere replicated in reality. However, as Weber (1949: 92) noted, an ideal type ought to be 'objectively possible,' that is, there is no inherent reason why it cannot in principle be realized.

6 Actually existent rebirth eschatologies can be seen as variations, elaborations, or additions to this model, inevitable in any empirical situation. Thus, Antonia Mills (1988b: 388) has described detailed rebirth beliefs of three Northwest Coast Indian groups, the Wet'su-wet'en, Beaver, and Gitksan, all of whom believe that both animals and humans have their own reincarnation cycles. This is also true of the Tlingit and Haida. While these beliefs show a striking parallelism with Indic religions, there is rarely a crossing of rebirth cycles. Each species is locked into its own cycle of continuity, though it is possible for human beings to seek contact with the spirit homes of other species and for a shaman to go on a vision quest and incorporate the spirit of an animal as his guardian spirit. As in Indic religions, these conceptions foster the belief that man and animals and even plants belong to a larger order of sentient existence. 'All three groups,' Mills

(1988b: 389) tells us 'believe that humans after death travel to a land of the dead, analogous to the spirit homes of the animal species from which they may appear to the living as ghosts.' The mode of entry into the spirit world may display substantive differences, but in general it is more or less a replica of the society that a particular species inhabited on earth. The precise location of the other world is above ground, or underground as with the Inuit, or in some indeterminate locale. However, for purposes of convenience I shall represent them topographically as existing in an abode above ground. When rebirth occurs the individual is born into the same village and often into the same unilineal kin group or family, thus:

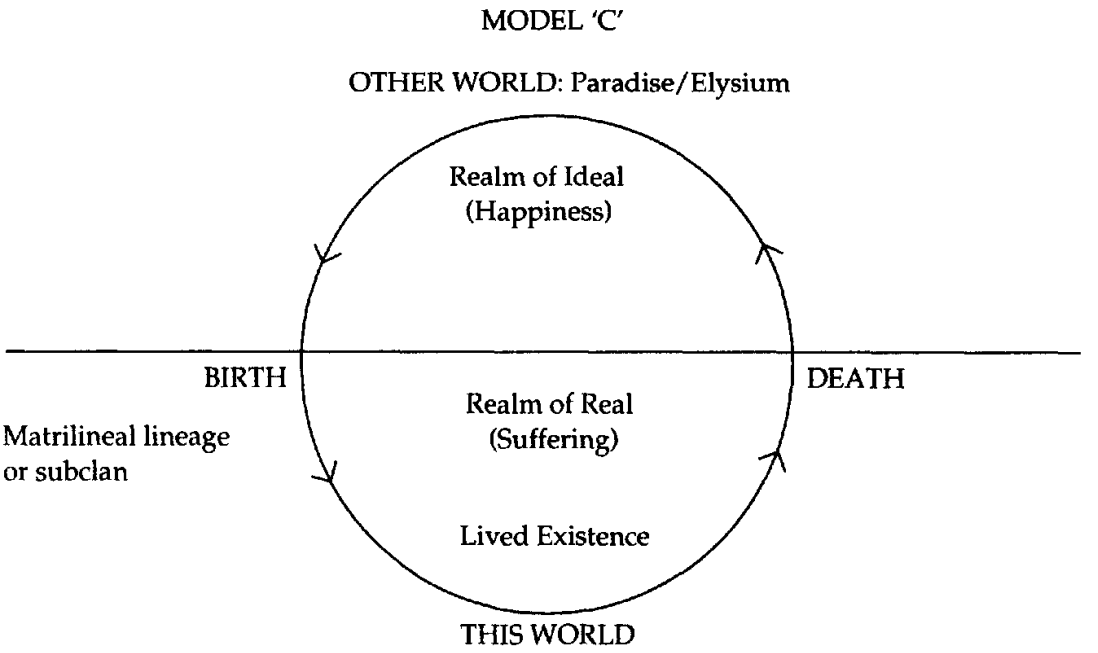


In most Northwest Coast Indians, and very clearly among Inuit groups, gender crossing is recognized and in some groups quite frequent.

7 There are enough data for us to construct other models also, for example, among Igbo groups described by Victor Uchendu (1965) and more recently by Simon Ottenberg (1992). But let me now deal with Malinowski's description of Trobriand rebirth theory (1966). The Trobriander also possess a Valhalla type of inverted eschatology where the other world is located below. According to Malinowski a new life in the Trobriand begins at the death of the individual when his spirit or *baloma* departs to Tuma the land of spirits. In Tuma the

individual leads a pleasant life, analogous to the terrestrial life but much happier. When ageing occurs, for example, the person can slough off his old skin and looks and get rejuvenated. Thus, the land of the spirits is *not* a replica of the earthly society. It is close to the model sketched by Hertz in his classic essay on death. The other world is modelled on this world but with one difference: pain or suffering that characterizes our human existence is eliminated. 'It is or can be,' says Hertz (1960: 79), 'the realm of the ideal.'

However, these paradisal other worlds or Elysia pose a paradox or a kind of 'theodicy' in the extended Weberian sense of a problem of meaning in relation to the existence of suffering. For Trobrianders Tuma is a realm of the ideal; if so why is there a need to leave it? The answer is that any rebirth theory definitionally requires one to be reborn in the human world. Consequently, Malinowski's informants had difficulties in explaining why one wants to leave a paradise for an imperfect human existence. Spirits, they said, get bored with paradise; or evil magic is practised on heaven as on earth, such that the spirit becomes tired of life even though a spirit being cannot be killed. In any case the spirit eventually leaps back in age, becomes a pre-incarnated entity and descends into the human world. In the Trobriand the place of birth is strictly determined: the spirit embryo finds its way into the womb of a woman of the same matrilineal clan or subclan from which he received his earthly kin identity, thus:



It should be noted, however, that the place of rebirth in the identical earthly lineage can exist in other rebirth models and can therefore be topographically inscribed into them. This means that a finite series of rebirth models can be topographically delineated as our ethnographic information expands.

8 All rebirth eschatologies pose an important problem of meaning pertaining to a powerful wish. If my kinsperson dies and is reborn in my midst, how do I identify him? Thus, in many societies there are ways of identifying the neonate's previous life persona, most often by divination; or by an 'announcing dream'; or by bodily marks that can be correlated with events in the person's previous life; or by behavioural similarities between the present and past persona of the reincarnated being, as is clear from Mills's essay (chapter 13) and the African material. The possibility of identifying the previous persona is dependent on one crucial feature – the length of sojourn in the other world. For example, in the Trobriand the spirit can live for a long period in Tuma; consequently, many generations on earth may elapse before the spirit decides to be reborn – in which case it would no longer remain in the memory of its kinfolk, or it would have no near or dear kin living. The reborn spirit's primary significance is as a being who ensures the continuity of the matrilineage. By contrast in Mills's sample the sojourn in the other world rarely exceeds eighteen months. Consequently the wish to identify the dead person is both practical and realizable. All of these societies implicitly or explicitly believe in a fixed pool of spirits that go round and round in an endless cycle of continuity, unless of course there is a countervailing belief in cross-reincarnation between humans and animals, or a notion of spontaneous generation, or the continuous creation of new souls by a powerful deity.

9 If a spirit or similar entity goes round and round in a circle, seeking incarnation in a human womb after a lengthy or short sojourn in the other world (or even bypassing it), what then is the role of human intercourse and seminal ejaculation in this scheme of things? The simplest solution is to postulate a Western logic of necessary and sufficient conditions, such that while copulation is a necessary condition for rebirth it is not a sufficient one. But this logic is an *external* one based on a scholarly reformulation of data supplied by informants. I think what you have in these societies is a *problem* of reconciling the idea of physical copulation with the fact that the soul or spirit has an independent motivation to be reborn on earth. Hence, a variety of

explanations exist in the empirical record (including ignoring the issue). In the present collection the most problematic case of reconciling the two ideas is that of the Dene Tha described by Goulet (chapter 10). In the anthropological record the classic cases come from the Australian Aborigines and the Trobrianders, who have formulated the idea of spirit conception without mediation through sexual intercourse; or more likely they had problems reconciling the fact of spirit conception with their empirical knowledge that animals at least must copulate to conceive. The differing opinions attributed to those people by ethnographers are not evidence for the truth of one set of beliefs as opposed to another; rather they indicate a variety of debates or positions on this issue by the indigenous peoples themselves.[2] I think that even highly speculative soteriologies like Buddhism that knew the reality of human conception through sexual intercourse might also continue to believe in the idea that conception could occur without it, the paradigmatic case being the Buddha himself whose own conception occurred when his mother was deliberately practising sexual abstinence.

Part 2

Indic Religions and Rebirth Eschatologies

The examples in this collection are all from what were historically small-scale societies. They are different from the Indic religions that appear in history around 500 BC along with the beginnings of new cities, extensive trade networks, and emerging monarchies and republics. Yet these larger groupings emerged from small beginnings and, as I suggested earlier, there is good reason to believe that these small beginnings were in turn associated with rebirth eschatologies of the sort described in this book. Yet it is clear that when the great Indic religions emerged into history they had another key doctrine *in addition to the doctrine of rebirth, namely that of karma*, a system of ethical intentions that decide the nature of rebirth. To compound matters further Indic religions had a doctrine of salvation defined by Buddhists and Jainas as *nirvāna* and by various Hindu orders as *moksha*.

These latter beliefs imply rebirth, but their soteriological significance is radically different. In order to highlight this difference let me designate the strict cyclical theories of small-scale societies as 'rebirth eschato-

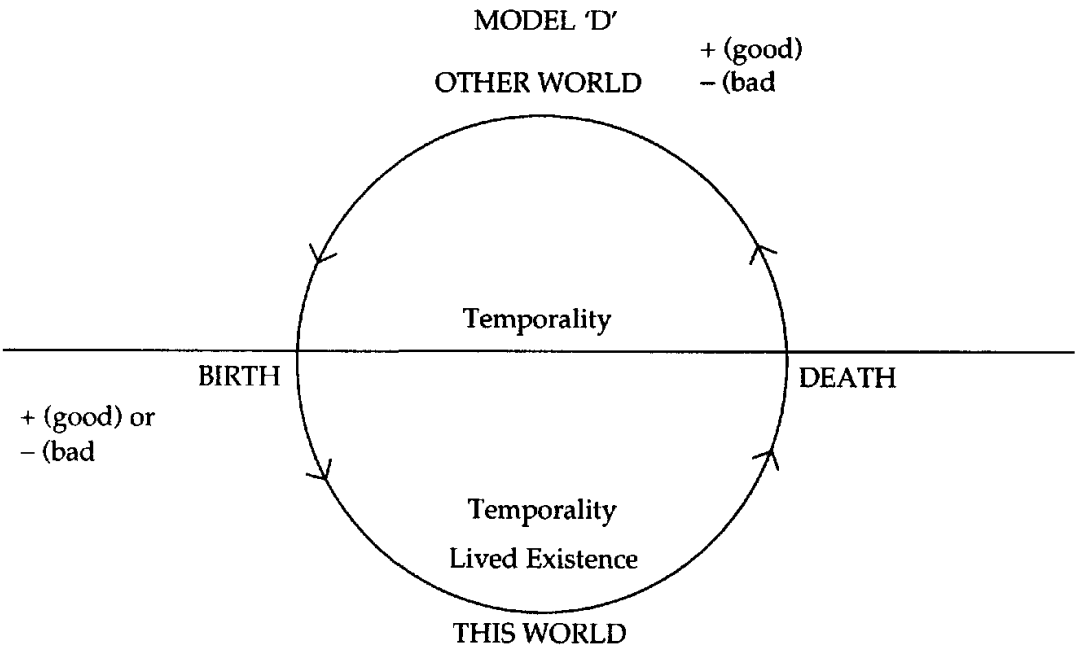
logies' or theories, and the Indic ones (and perhaps the Greek Pythagorean) as 'karmic eschatologies.' Following my assumption that rebirth eschatologies existed in many parts of the world, including India, the question I shall pose is this: How did the 'rebirth eschatology' whose basic structure I have sketched earlier get transformed into 'karmic eschatology'? Because there is no way to obtain empirical evidence for any of this, the only alternative is *outside* the empirical realm, through the manipulation of ideal types or models. Following Karl Jaspers (1949) and Shmuel Eisenstadt and others (1986), I suggest that Buddhism, along with other religions of the time, were products of an 'axial' period that heralded a profound speculative systematization or rationalization of the religious life.

Nevertheless, Indic religions did not practise an exclusive rationalization of the sort recognized by Weber for Western civilization eventually leading to an erosion of the magical garden. There were multiple rationalizations that permitted the incorporation of different forms of knowledge (for example, revelation and mystical insight) to be included as legitimate. However, I want to highlight one kind of rationalism that India shared with other axial civilizations, namely, a process that I shall label 'ethicization.'

What ethicization does is to affirm that the secular morality or ethics that govern everyday lives should be extended to govern our lives after death. This means that the entry into the afterlife is *conditional* on ethical conduct in one's earthly existence. Thus, lying or fornication or stealing is an ethically wrong action in most human societies; it is also simultaneously a religiously wrong action in religions like Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. In the traditional Amerindian rebirth eschatologies there is little evidence that adultery or stealing, though immoral and punishable in this world, must necessarily lead to punishment in the next. Nevertheless, it would be surprising if there was not even the slightest tendency towards ethicization in some rebirth eschatologies. For example, the Igbo confine those who practise incest and other heinous actions to a special limbo or place of suffering, but this does not cover the violation of everyday morality. A clearer case of ethicization is Rasmussen's Inuit (Eskimos), cited by Turner, who believe that lack of piety will cause a human soul to be reincarnated as an animal; but this also is an occasional and not a rigorous ethicization of everyday morality, as I read the evidence (chapter 5). By contrast religions like Buddhism have *systematized* ethicization to such a degree that morally wrong actions are by definition religiously wrong actions. Ethicization

is a complex historical process that must be described for each religion, but for present purposes I have to take that complexity for granted.

It can easily be shown that when ethicization occurs any rebirth eschatology must get transformed topographically into the karmic type. If one's entry into the other world is dependent on the ethical nature of one's this-worldly actions, then that other world cannot remain ethically neutral; that is, it cannot remain as a replica of this world or a paradise which is available for anyone to enter more or less unconditionally. It must become a place of ethical compensation – reward and punishment. A kind of harshness, not evident in the eschatologies of small-scale societies, has now entered and taken a hold on the religious life. When this happens the other world must *minimally* split into two: a good world for those who have led ethically good lives and a bad world for the immoral. Now in any rebirth eschatology the stay in the other world is temporary (by definition): the spirit, irrespective of place and time of sojourn, has to be reborn in the human world. But ethicization must apply here also, so that the human world must also become a place where ethical compensation holds sway, in which case there has to be minimally a good rebirth and a bad one. The conditionality of reward that ethicization entails extends to the whole eschatological sphere producing at the very least a good or bad existence both in the other world and in the human re-existence that must inevitably follow. These topographical transformations can be depicted conveniently in plus and minus signs.



In this scheme, a spirit, soul, or whatever entity that receives incarnation in a human womb, is endlessly reincarnated in cycle after cycle as the logic of rebirth requires, but governed strictly by ethics. This is exactly what Indic religions mean by *karma*; and the cycles of continuity are what they call *samsāra*. However there is one feature that is *not* entailed by the theoretical manipulation of the model, namely, that in Indic religions one can be born as an animal as a consequence of one's bad *karma*. This idea could have arisen as a simple consequence of ethical speculation or, more likely, it meant that early Indic societies probably had theories of rebirth that permitted the crossing of animal and human rebirths (and also that of gender), as with the Inuit. Or, crossing of animal and human spiritual existence might itself have been a product of incipient ethicization, as Rasmussen's Inuit data seem to suggest.

Another key difference that ethicization introduces into the rebirth model pertains to the locale of rebirth. In the rebirth eschatologies a person is generally reborn among kinfolk or, where the unilinear principle is strong, in the very same lineage or clan. With ethicization this is not possible: it is the ethical nature of one's this-worldly actions that determine the place and status of rebirth and *not* one's kinship affiliations. Ethicization upsets the rigidly closed cycle of the rebirth eschatology. This is borne out by the data gathered for Indic societies by both Stevenson (1974, 1977) and Mills (1989, 1992). In spite of the omnipresence of *karma* and rebirth in South Asia, it is rarely that a person claims to remember his or her past birth in any specific community; equally rare is the motivation for someone to identify a person as a dead member of the group on the basis of signs such as birthmarks, dreams, and behavioural similarities.

In my view ethicization is an early movement of axial civilizations towards a transcendental order because such an ethic is validated by a transcendental deity (as in the monotheisms) or by a transcendental or abstract law as in *karma*, a law that exists over and above the order of sentient beings. Nevertheless, the eschatology of *karma* shares with any rebirth theory the endless cycle of continuity from which there is no escape. There is no transcendence from this cycle. To put it differently there is no 'salvation' possible in this model, if by salvation one means a transcendence of suffering and of the world. Consider the nature of this eschatology once again. If I have done ethically wrong actions (committed 'sin') I will be punished in another world or in a bad rebirth or both until I have expiated my sin (*pāpa* in Indian religions). If I have done 'religious merit' (*punya karma* in Indian religions), I will be rewarded in a happy

hereafter or a good rebirth. Either way I must continue my existence in *samsāra* or the karmically determined rebirth cycle. In this situation I can neither be able to eliminate suffering nor transcend the world (*samsāra*), for even if I achieve a blissful state in heaven this is by definition *temporary*, for I must eventually come down to earth which is once again inevitably associated with suffering. Even those who are fortunate can never be fortunate enough to eliminate frustration of desire, illness, transience, and death, all aspects of temporality intrinsic in any rebirth theory. It is no accident that Indian religious thinkers have defined salvation (*nirvāna, moksha*) as the cessation of *karma* or the cessation of the rebirth cycle. I suggest that this is a structural requirement of the karmic eschatology: salvation must be sought outside the rebirth cycle because within it no true salvation is possible.

In conclusion let me briefly recapture the argument of this essay. I have suggested that the papers collected in this volume are a valuable documentation not only for Amerindian and Inuit (or Eskimo) religion but also for stimulating the comparative study of rebirth theories from other parts of the world. Beyond that it compels us to question the purported uniqueness of Indian religions and see them as part of a larger distribution of similar life-forms. I tried to construct the basic form of a rebirth eschatology, its inescapable logic as it were, entailing a cyclical theory of continuity. This model or ideal type is transformed into another when a historical process or movement I have labelled 'ethicization' occurs. Ethicization is an unusual societal condition whereby a previously secular morality, characteristic of most human societies, is now given a religious definition. In this introduction I have not shown how this process came about or the agencies that brought about its realization except to suggest its association with the kind of 'rationalization' or systematization of thought found in the so-called axial age civilizations. When ethicization occurs the rebirth eschatology of the small-scale societies discussed in this book must become transformed in the more complex 'karmic eschatologies' that are found in Indic societies and surely in other societies also, as our knowledge of the spread of these eschatologies develops. This book in my view heralds the beginning of this new knowledge so necessary for the comparative study of religions.

Notes

1 For example, Nadel (1946) refers to reincarnation only in relation to mythic

ancestors who possess shamans. But he mentions one exception of a chief who led a revolt against the British in 1918 and was later executed. He was reincarnated in his surviving brother.

2 The debate on 'virgin birth' was initiated by Edmund Leach's provocative essay, 'Virgin Birth,' the 1966 Henry Myers Lecture (1967: 39–49), followed by Melford E. Spiro's equally provocative, 'Virgin Birth, Parthenogenesis, and Physiological Paternity: An Essay on Cultural Interpretation,' in *Man* (1968). This was followed by debates in *Man* in the first three numbers of volume 3 (1968). In typical anthropological fashion the views of Native informants were used to prove or refute the anthropologist's own opinions; I think these views simply indicated debates going on among the informants themselves.

Amerindian Rebirth
Reincarnation Belief among
North American Indians
and Inuit

ANTONIA MILLS

1 Introduction

ABSTRACT. This chapter discusses why the prevalence of reincarnation belief among Amerindians and Inuit has not been fully appreciated heretofore and introduces the following chapters. We suggest that reincarnation belief has been underestimated because it was not part of the Western world-view and hence was not expected; and also because Amerindian and Inuit belief on the subject is varied and complex, and not clearly manifest in the oral traditions. We review the early ethnographic record that does exist, and indicate how and why this record may be incomplete, before introducing the chapters in this book, which review or provide examples of the intricacies of reincarnation belief, from the seventeenth-century Huron and twentieth-century Winnebago to the Inuit, Subarctic, and Northwest Coast peoples. The range of theoretical discussion, including the issue of whether there is any evidence that Amerindian and Inuit belief is based on what should be considered valid evidence, is described.

> We do believe in life after death. The many deities and spirits come from that belief. We return in the form of animals, trees, birds, spirits and other forms. We are part of the whole. We are the whole. We are a part of the spirit world now. We will be a part of it in the future. We have always been a part of it ... all things are one, and all life is one in one circle of time.
> Paiute Medicine Man (Toombs 1991)

This book is designed to bring attention to the prevalence and the variety of rebirth and reincarnation concepts among North American Native peoples both in the past and in the present. As Slobodin points

out in chapter 16, this is 'the first collection of papers centring on the subject of reincarnation in indigenous North American belief and social action.' For the most part both anthropologists and the general public have been unaware that some form of belief in rebirth or reincarnation is widespread among North American Inuit and Indians.[1] Indeed, most anthropologists and the general public are unaware of how pervasive some form of reincarnation belief is among animistic, tribal, and/or shamanic peoples throughout the world. Yet belief in some form of reincarnation is probably part of human religion and society from its earliest evolution (see Eliade 1964; Mills 1986, 1988a). It is Mills's contention that reincarnation concepts form part of the deep structure of Amerindian and Inuit spiritual thought, as well as that of other peoples.

Why then has it taken more than 500 years of contact for a single book to appear that describes the role of reincarnation in North American indigenous culture? There are a number of reasons. Early colonists and, later, anthropologists were not expecting to find reincarnation belief among Amerindians; reincarnation was not part of their worldview. Reincarnation was known to educated American colonists from its classical Greek forms; they were largely unaware of the Hindu and Buddhist reincarnation texts which were not translated and accessible to Western scholars until some 350 years after initial European colonization of the New World. Neither Greek nor Hindu nor Buddhist reincarnation was expected. Nonetheless, the Trait Index to North American Indian and Inuit Reincarnation in the Appendix demonstrates the sporadic record available to us, to which we now turn. Readers are referred to the maps in the Trait Index which show the location of the societies for which some form of reincarnation belief was noted.

History of the Record of Amerindian and Inuit Belief[2]

The earliest mention we have found of Amerindian reincarnation belief is from the English colonist Strachey writing about the Virginia Powhatan in 1612 (Wright and Freund 1953); Strachey drew the parallel with Pythagoras's concept of reincarnation. The Jesuit record of Huron soul and rebirth concepts, dating from 1632, is the next record of reincarnation concepts on the continent. The Jesuit record, often through Thwaites's translation, is the source for many of the early references to reincarnation in the New World, such as Frazer (1911: 366–7) and Hewitt (1895: 109).

Interestingly, there is no further mention of reincarnation concepts

until 1746, more than a century later, when the missionary Brainerd recorded a specific case or account of reincarnation among the Delaware or Lenape Indians (Edwards and Sereno 1822). Part of this account is quoted in the Editor's notes to chapter 4 by Paul Radin. The next references are from the 1760s (Charlevoix 1761; Crantz 1767). This latter is concerning the Inuit of Greenland.

In the last forty years of the eighteenth century and in the nineteenth century there are accounts which mention reincarnation belief, for example from the trader Lyon (1791), and from a number of chroniclers and scholars. Chronologically these were Loskeil 1794; Heckewelder 1819; Schoolcraft 1851, 1854, 1855; Hale 1846; Holmberg 1850–1 (1985); Parkman 1867; Dall 1870; Brinton 1876, 1885; Dawson 1880; Krause 1885 (1956). There are also accounts from settlers, such as Sproat 1868, and missionaries, such as Veniaminov 1840 (1984), Eells re the Twana from 1889 (1985), and Castile and Petitot (1893). The Frenchman Pinart was the first anthropologist to note belief in reincarnation among the Tlingit (1872) and the Inuit (1873). Cushing's writings on the Pueblo in 1896, although not explicit in describing reincarnation concepts, described the ceremonies in which the living fathers are revealed to be the Kachina ancestors. Boas reported the Central Inuit naming system in 1888, and explicit Inuit belief in 1901. He reported belief in reincarnation among the Tlingit in 1890 and among the Kwakiutl in 1891, 1896, 1921 and 1932b. Mauss (1985 [1938]) noted Cushing's Pueblo and Boas's Northwest Coast examples, and postulated that belief in the return of the ancestors through reincarnation formed one stage in the evolution of the concept of the person, in which social roles were linked to the naming of an individual with one of the limited set of recycling names. The contents of this book, including the Trait Index, indicate that references to Amerindian and Inuit reincarnation concepts became more numerous as the number of Americanist ethnographers increased in the twentieth century.

How Complete Is This Record?

Von Gernet in chapter 3 suggests that the Jesuit missionaries' education in classical thought made them interested in hearing what the Huron had to say about reincarnation. He certainly shows that the seventeenth-century Jesuits had taken care in learning about the Huron concepts of the different aspects of the soul. However, I am somewhat sceptical about whether the Jesuits, and many anthropologists, learned everything

there was to know about Native reincarnation concepts. The goal of the Jesuits was less to record all aspects of Native belief than to learn enough to instruct the Natives in Catholic concepts. While it is true that Jesuits were trained in classical Greek ideas, which included reincarnation, they were more learned in Aristotelian thought than in that of Plato, and Aristotle came to repudiate the reincarnation concepts of his teacher. Furthermore, Jesuits were fully aware that the Catholic church had made belief in reincarnation anathema in AD 325, and that it later had suppressed the French Cathar resurgence of reincarnation belief in the thirteenth century. I suspect that the seventeenth-century Jesuit missionaries took more trouble to learn about Huron concepts of the soul, which gave them a point of contact with the Native eschatology, than concepts about reincarnation. Indeed, Von Gernet's opening quotes suggest that the Huron, once they had learned the Jesuit views, soon became reticent on matters for which they met rebuff.

The Jesuit record, however, is an important if incomplete source. Perhaps if there had been more Jesuit missions in North America, we would not have had to wait a hundred years for the next record of reincarnation belief. We can be fairly certain that there was more to know on the topic than was recorded by later ethnographers except for the few, such as Haile, Hallowell, Radin, and Slobodin who specifically and purposefully probed the matter.

Cierra Toombs, a Hupa Indian woman, indicated some of the difficulties in learning about the subject of reincarnation: 'The word "reincarnation" left me a bit confused when I thought about my own beliefs as I walk on the Indian Spiritual Path. I discussed your letter and research with a medicine man from the Paiute tribe (Yosemite Valley) who resides on the Paiute reservation. He speaks for Paiutes ... He said that many anthropological studies fell short due to the fact that they did not know what questions to ask. He felt this was particularly true in talking to elders ... To ask an elder if they believed in life after death, or reincarnation, would not elicit the response needed. This is because an elder may not understand the question due to the knowledge we are now a part of that spirit world. We live with cyclic time rather than linear time, and all things are one, and all life is one in one circle of time.' (Extract of letter to A.M. by Cierra Toombs, 21 October 1991.)[3]

We do know that the concepts of the missionaries and European settlers had an impact on Native belief. The revitalization movements with which Natives responded to the coming of the Europeans, such as Handsome Lake (Wallace 1956, 1969), the Prophet cults (Spier 1935; Du

Bois 1939), and the Ghost Dance (Mooney 1965 [1896]) have incorporated Christian concepts about getting to heaven with no explicit integration of rebirth concepts. However, adherence to the Prophet Dance and belief in reincarnation are certainly not mutually exclusive categories, as the Beaver Indian Prophet Dance and continued belief in human reincarnation attest (Mills 1982, 1986).

Wachtmeister (1956) has noted that there was a record of belief in reincarnation among the East Greenland Inuit (citing Crantz 1767) which was subsequently lost (citing Birket-Smith 1924, which mentions only name souls and not reincarnation). We can presume that the same process occurred without the initial documentation of the belief elsewhere, but it is impossible to know exactly where and how often this happened.

Complexity of Amerindian Reincarnation Belief

A further reason the topic has heretofore not been summarized is that Amerindian and Inuit thought on the topic is complex and varied and defies succinct definition. The Western tradition is characterized by written records and ecclesiastical doctrine; Amerindian and Inuit ideologies are based on the interplay of a variety of cultural traditions and personal experience. Reincarnation concepts among Amerindian and Inuit are not easy to summarize or isolate because they vary widely between groups, and they are embedded in a whole constellation of complex concepts about the spiritual nature of humans, animals, trees, birds, and spirits – guardian and otherwise.

Ruth Benedict (1923) encountered the same diversity in studying the North American Indian guardian-spirit complex. She concluded that there was so much variability in the different North American Indians' guardian-spirit thought that it was impossible to make valid generalizations about the complex. However, in writing a monograph on the topic, she demonstrated that guardian-spirit and vision-quest concepts embody important indigenous thought about the relation of the individual to spirit protectors and supernatural powers. The variation in reincarnation belief between the different North American Indian and Inuit groups is just as great as the variation in the guardian-spirit complex. It is our hope that this volume on reincarnation belief will be as useful as Benedict's work on the guardian-spirit complex in pointing out the importance of the concept to Amerindian and Inuit peoples.

Several major scholars (Hultkrantz and Eliade) have made summaries

of concepts that are related to Amerindian and Inuit reincarnation but without addressing the topic of reincarnation in detail. Hultkrantz (1953) has categorized the complexity of Amerindian concepts of the soul (see von Gernet's summary in this volume), as well as the prevalence of Orpheus myths (Hultkrantz 1957), in which a living person does not succeed in bringing back someone who has passed into the land of the dead. Orpheus myths are indeed far more common among North American Indians than oral traditions that refer to reincarnation; this is another reason why the concept has not received more attention.[4]

Eliade's (1964) work on shamanism on all continents has emphasized the mystical rebirth of the shaman in the land of the dead, an indigenous or prototypical near-death experience, which came either unbidden through being sick onto death, or through conscious striving. However, Eliade emphasized rebirth during the shaman's life – the transformative experience in another realm – rather than cataloguing shamanic cultures' concepts of rebirth between separate lives. Although Eliade was an expert on Hindu and Buddhist rebirth concepts (cf. Eliade 1954, 1958) his book on shamanism (1964) makes only one reference to reincarnation belief among North American Indians (indeed it is the Radin account reprinted in this volume).[5] However, there is no doubt that shamanism and reincarnation concepts are closely connected.

The Chapters in This Book

The chapters in this book depict some of the variations of reincarnation belief among the descendants of the aboriginal inhabitants of the North American continent. In chapter 2 Antonia Mills contrasts Amerindian concepts with Hindu and Buddhist reincarnation belief and reviews the ethnographic record of such belief by culture area, and then by recurrent overlapping themes, thus establishing the context for the following chapters.

The next chapter begins the tour of Amerindian and Inuit belief in the east and at the historically earliest period of recorded contact. In chapter 3 Alexander von Gernet reconstructs what we can know of Huron reincarnation belief from the seventeenth-century Jesuit record. For reasons pointed out by von Gernet and above, the record is more revealing of the Huron thought on souls than on reincarnation, but von Gernet's careful appraisal allows us to glean something of Huron thought at this early phase of native/missionary/conquistodor relations.

Chapter 4 shifts to the classic twentieth-century 'autobiographical'

account of Thunder Cloud's reincarnation 'memories' as recorded among the Winnebago by Paul Radin, providing the intimate detail which is tantalizingly absent from the Jesuit Huron account. The text reprinted in this volume portrays the link between shamanic powers, death in battle, near-death experiences, and reincarnation.

In chapter 5 the tour moves to the first of four chapters on Inuit reincarnation concepts, followed by two chapters on aspects of Western Subarctic belief, which is followed by four chapters on Northwest Coast concepts and cases of rebirth.

The venue of the Arctic chapters is a reminder that the Inuit people (formerly called 'Eskimo') occupy a vast area. Edith Turner's chapter 5 is sited at Point Hope on the northwest corner of Alaska, facing the Chukchee Sea. Turner puts the expertise of the reincarnated hunter into the framework of the Inupiaq intense concern with bringing back, reincarnating, the whale – their food and sustenance. She dramatically portrays the contemporary Point Hope ritual that enables the whale that has been caught to reconstitute itself in a new body.

Saladin d'Anglure, Guemple, and Nuttall describe some of the implications of sharing a name among different Inuit groups, Saladin d'Anglure for the Central Canadian Arctic, Guemple for the Belcher Islands in Hudson Bay, and Nuttall for West Greenland. Saladin d'Anglure and, to a lesser extent, Guemple depict the relationship of multiple naming to reincarnation concepts.

Chapter 6 by Bernard Saladin d'Anglure (particularly in the full-length article from which his contribution in this volume is extracted) uses a structuralist approach based on Lévi-Strauss's appreciation that human beings think in terms of binary opposites and cultures act to mediate and resolve the tension between these oppositions. In Saladin d'Anglure's analysis, the opposition of the genders is mediated by the cross-gendered category, the third sex, those who have crossed the sexual boundary between incarnations. The shamans, who mediate between the living and dead, the upper and underworlds, between humans and animals, are particularly likely to be these cross-gendered reincarnates.

In chapter 7 Lee Guemple describes the multiple relationships that pertain among Belcher Island Inuit where each child is given a single name held both by a living person and by a deceased relative. Guemple also describes Belcher Island concepts of animal reincarnation and shows how both human and animal forms relate to 'collective continuous incarnation.'

Mark Nuttall in chapter 8 makes apparent for us how sharing names embeds the individual in a social network that acts as a support group and point of reference; he describes the sense of loss a Greenland Inuit has when he/she moves outside of the native community where the shared name is meaningful. Like Guemple, he is struck by 'the emphasis on continuity rather than finality' expressed in rebirth belief and other concepts.

The next two chapters concern speakers of Northern Athapaskan languages. As with the Inuit, the reader is reminded of the vast distances involved in these sparsely peopled northern regions. At least 800 air miles separate the Dene Tha of Hay Lake, Alberta, from the Peel River Kutchin of the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, and this distance compasses only a fraction of Northern Athapaskan territory.

Chapter 9 reproduces Slobodin's 1970 article on Kutchin reincarnation, followed by his 'Afterthoughts,' which add new data on the interval between lives and further information on the intriguing case of Black Tom. He points out that an interesting aspect of Kutchin reincarnation beliefs as of 1970 was that, although considerably secularized, these beliefs were held universally within the community and were known and sometimes accepted by non-Kutchin of the area.

In chapter 10 Jean-Guy Goulet describes reincarnation belief among the Dene Tha, a Beaver/Slavey group of northwest Alberta. He points out the contemporary connection with adolescent pregnancy: because many married women have been sterilized during the past generation, there is a shortage of 'adult fertile women in whom spirits would normally come back to reincarnate.' These spirits therefore return via the unmarried teenage girls. Goulet expresses poignantly the ambivalence that the girls' fathers feel towards having esteemed relatives and friends reincarnate as the babies of their nubile daughters, before posing searching questions about reincarnation research aimed at assessing whether some cases are valid.

In chapters 11 through 14 we turn to the Northwest Coast. Because Boas's ethnography of the Kwakiutl has played such an important part in anthropology and in Northwest Coast studies, this section begins with Marie Mauzé's reconstruction of Kwakiutl thought on the subject of the person in chapter 11. Although Mauzé has herself conducted fieldwork among the Kwakiutl, her chapter rests on a reconstruction of Kwakiutl concepts derived from material collected by earlier ethnographers, especially Boas.

Chapter 12 by Michael Harkin describes another Wakashan-speaking tribes of the Pacific Northwest. Like Mauzé, Harkin has done fieldwork among these people, without focusing on reincarnation concepts. Again like Mauzé, Harkin is to a large extent aiming at the reconstruction of traditional culture as recorded in classic ethnographic texts. Harkin employs a prevalent anthropological concept, showing how one institution, in this case reincarnation concepts, articulates with symbols and structure on a number of different levels.

Both Mauzé's and Harkin's chapters have been stimulated by Marcel Mauss's 'category of the person.' They represent extensions of Mauss's concern with understanding how concepts of the self are elaborated in kin-based, status-conscious, non-Western societies. In her more European view, Mauzé sees in Kwakiutl ideology an illustration of the distinction between the 'individual,' a flesh-and-blood organism, and the 'person,' a collection of social relationships.[6] 'The acquisition of successive names,' Mauzé states, results in 'a transformation of status, or identity. The person is thus the manifestation of the name, the living representative of the succession of (related) name holders.'

Harkin, like Mauzé, begins with his understanding of Mauss's distinction between 'the self ... associated with the life force or soul' and 'persona, which is related to the title-name.' A distinctive feature of Harkin's essay is the contrast he presents between Native American and 'Western' concepts of reincarnation and how these relate to the experience of individuality in these different cultural contexts.

Chapter 13, by Mills, on Gitksan pierced-ear birthmarks, is based on specific fieldwork on reincarnation concepts. The chapter describes three cases and then considers whether the data indicate the possibility that reincarnation in this society is an actuality – or no more than an artefact of cultural interpretation. Like Goulet in his chapter, Mills considers what further research would be relevant to answering this question.

Chapter 14 is a reprint of Stevenson's 1966 article on Tlingit 'possible cases of reincarnation,' to which he has added his contemporary 'Afterthoughts.' He notes that, 'Probably the highest incidence of reported cases in the world occurs in Alaska among the Tlingit Indians.' The chapter and 'Afterthoughts' chronicle and summarize the results of his repeated visits to the Tlingit. He shows that the patterning of cases in this highly status-conscious society provides a marked contrast to reported rebirth occurrences in some of the other northern societies

discussed in this volume. Stevenson suggests 'the probability that paranormal experiences influence culture just as much as culture influences paranormal experiences.'

Chapter 15 by James Matlock presents a bold if polemic argument that reincarnation concepts are embedded in kinship structure and spread to North America as part of the general diaspora from Africa. He charts the relation of alternate-generation equivalent kinship systems to rebirth ideology, placing Amerindian and Inuit belief in 'a global perspective.'

The final chapter, by Richard Slobodin, is an expansion of his comments on the original papers presented at a session on Amerindian and Inuit reincarnation concepts from which the present volume has grown. In it he raises issues that recur throughout the chapters of this book, about concepts of the self/person/individual; about syncretism of ancient and Christian concepts by Amerindians and Inuit; about the appropriateness of a syncretistic approach to issues of reincarnation.

These chapters are followed by an Appendix which includes the Trait Index to North American Indian and Inuit Reincarnation, prepared by James Matlock and Antonia Mills. This Appendix also includes maps which point out the location of the 130 societies in the Trait Index.

The Range of Analytical Approaches

The chapters in this book represent a wide range of anthropological approaches, including ethnohistorical, structural-functionalist, and symbolic interpretations. A second theoretical question relating to reincarnation belief is raised in several of the papers: Is there something demonstrable in these cases? Stevenson (1974, 1975a, 1977, 1980, 1983, 1987) is largely responsible for formulating the question whether reported cases of reincarnation present evidence for survival after bodily death. This is a question that anthropologists seldom ask, although Bock (1988) has noted that anthropologists (himself included) are sometimes faced with reincarnation accounts.

An early reader of this manuscript hoped that Slobodin and I would separate the book into two discrete parts, one that used traditional anthropological paradigms and one that asked the question, Is there any evidence to support reincarnation belief? Slobodin and I did not opt to keep these issues separate. We do not see it as an either/or problem. Structural, functionalist, symbolic, and/or Freudian explanations do not become invalid if there should be something valid to reincarnation

concepts. It should be expected that reincarnation concepts/cases operate in conformity with meaningful structural categories: matrilineal societies reincarnating their personnel in the same matrilines, bilateral societies in the same cross/parallel categories.

Despite the variations in belief about rebirth among Amerindians and Inuit, it is noteworthy that the examples cited in the ethnographic literature tend to follow the patterns that Stevenson has noted for reincarnation cases in the twelve cultures he has studied on four continents, including both tribal and Hindu and Buddhist cultures. These patterns include young children apparently talking from the vantage point of the person they claim to be, behavioural skills appropriate to the previous personality, a high rate of reported violent, sudden, or premature death of the person the child claims to be, phobias associated with the mode of death, and the fading of the apparent past-life memories by the time the child is between seven and nine years old. Cultural expectation about the parameters of cases invariably has an impact on the reported cases, but these features seem to be quite constant across not only Amerindian and Inuit cultures, but all those in which the phenomenon has been investigated.

No one is claiming that the evidence presented in this book demonstrates that reincarnation takes place. But we do invite our audience to examine critically the evidence, to be aware that there is some evidence, and to recognize that it deserves careful appraisal rather than facile dismissal. Consideration of Amerindian and Inuit perspectives demands no less.

It is our hope that regardless of theoretical orientation, once anthropologists are aware of the prevalence and persistence of the concept, they will gather further information about Native concepts from the Indian and Inuit groups with whom they work. There are a number of reasons for anthropologists to look further into Amerindian and Inuit reincarnation concepts: Native concepts of reincarnation and rebirth are important to Native and anthropological understandings of cosmology; the meaning of kinship systems (lineal and otherwise); naming practices, mortuary practices, and adoption practices; concepts of identity, self, and gender; as well as Native concepts of psychology, education, and child-rearing, as the chapters in this book portray.

We invite our readers to become familiar with the features of reincarnation belief and cases and to assess for themselves the validity and utility of the varying approaches presented. We have much to learn about the ontological bases of belief in and cases of reincarnation.

Notes

1 We have adopted the term 'Inuit' to refer to the Native peoples of the North American Arctic, who were formerly referred to as the 'Eskimo.' As Goddard (1984: 5–7) points out, the term 'Eskimo' fell into disrepute among the people so called when it was (erroneously) thought to carry negative connotations. Eskimo speakers call themselves by several different terms: Inuit (the plural of *inuk*, which means real, genuine person) among the West Greenland and central Canadian peoples; Yupik among the central Siberian and southwestern Alaskan peoples; Inupiaq among the north Alaska peoples; and Yuit among the Siberian and St Lawrence Island peoples. The Inuit Circumpolar Conference officially adopted Inuit as the designation of all Eskimos in 1977. We have opted to follow that convention, particularly when referring to eastern or central Arctic societies.

2 I refer the reader to the Trait Index in the Appendix for the citations of the original mention of reincarnation beliefs. Secondary sources are cited in the References.

3 Chapter 2 mentions that the excellent ethnographer Kroeber was unaware of Yurok reincarnation belief.

4 Hultkrantz notes (1953: 412), 'The Indian thinkers did not only speculate upon the contents and mutual relations of the various souls. They also endeavoured to answer the questions of the ultimate origin of the soul and its human incarnation. More firmly anchored in the popular mind was the belief in pre-existence, especially in so far as it emerged as a natural consequence of the generally prevalent belief in reincarnation.' This seminal scholar notes references to reincarnation not only as it relates to naming the child (Hultkrantz 1953: 325–30), but as it relates to adoption (1953: 326), to concepts of the pre-existence of the soul, or aspects of the soul (1953: 416), and to the course of the soul or its components after death (1953: 477).

5 Eliade's six other rebirth references in the book are to Hindu belief (p. 61), Siberian reincarnation belief (pp. 213, 246), Semang belief (p. 281), South American Indian belief (p. 323), and a Chinese Orpheus myth (p. 458).

6 Slobodin has noted that her usage is closer to Radcliffe-Brown's view than to Mauss's evolutionary schema. In Radcliffe-Brown's trenchant illustration of the conceptual difference between 'person' or 'social personality' and 'individual': If you tell me that an individual and a person are ... really the same thing, I would remind you of the Christian creed. God is three persons, but to say that He is three individuals is to be guilty of a heresy for which men have been put to death (1940: 194).

ANTONIA MILLS

2 Reincarnation Belief among North American Indians and Inuit: Context, Distribution, and Variation

ABSTRACT. This chapter contrasts Amerindian and Inuit reincarnation belief with the main extant, 'ethicized' versions of reincarnation, for example, the Hindu and Buddhist models, which have become the best known models of reincarnation. This leads to a brief discussion of the origins of Amerindian and Inuit reincarnation beliefs, followed by a summary of the variety of such beliefs by culture or geographical area. Because some themes cut across culture-area lines, recurrent themes in Amerindian and Inuit belief (cross-sex reincarnation, naming practices, multiple reincarnation, reincarnation and kinship systems, human-to-animal and animal-to-human reincarnation, and concepts of the person as they relate to child-rearing practices) are then summarized.

In this chapter I begin by contrasting Amerindian and Inuit reincarnation belief with the Hindu and Buddhist models, which have become the dominant models of reincarnation. This leads to a brief discussion of the origins of Amerindian and Inuit reincarnation belief. I then summarize the nature of such belief by culture or geographical area. Because some themes cut across culture-area lines, I then discuss these recurrent themes in Amerindian and Inuit belief (cross-sex reincarnation, naming practices, multiple reincarnation, reincarnation and kinship systems, human-to-animal and animal-to-human reincarnation, and concepts of the person as they relate to child-rearing practices).

Rebirth in and outside of the Hindu/Buddhist Tradition

Today reincarnation is usually associated with its expression in Hindu and Buddhist philosophy. There have, however, been many references

to the subject among the native peoples in many parts of the world outside of North America. Spencer (1966/1914) and Spencer and Gillen (1904) were the first to describe the concept and the varieties of concepts among the Australian Aborigines. In 1916 Malinowski portrayed the belief in rebirth of the Trobriand Islanders. Belief in some form of rebirth has been widely reported in Africa, and it is perhaps best characterized by Parrinder (1956) and summarized by Besterman (1968). In a sample of societies throughout the world used by Somersan (1984) twenty-eight of forty-seven societies or sixty per cent showed belief in some form of reincarnation. Fürer-Haimendorf (1953) has described reincarnation belief among the tribal peoples of India as perhaps representative of the kind of reincarnation belief out of which the sophisticated Hindu and Buddhist concepts may have emerged.

The classic Hindu and Buddhist concepts of reincarnation became defined around the sixth century BC, at and after the time of the Buddha.[1] To oversimplify grossly, the common theme of Hindu and Buddhist reincarnation belief is the concept that one's actions during life (and one's desires at its end) determine how, to whom, and with what qualities one will be reborn. The concept of *karma*, or the effects of past action, unites past actions with a moral universe.

It has taken an anthropologist from the Buddhist tradition to make a general typology of reincarnation/rebirth belief. Obeyesekere (1980) has noted the prevalence of reincarnation belief in non-Western societies and contrasted tribal belief with reincarnation belief expressed in Hindu, Buddhist, and Jaina philosophy. He differentiates tribal belief from the Hindu/Buddhist/Jaina belief in reincarnation on the basis of whether the concept is related to a concept of salvation, noting that in these three traditions salvation is defined as getting out of the cycle of rebirth.

In this typology, salvation is also the goal of the other 'ethicized' major world religions, namely the Judeo-Christian and Moslem traditions. However, in the Judeo-Christian traditions, and in most but not all Moslem traditions,[2] salvation is equated with reaching heaven or becoming one with God on the basis of a single terrestrial life.

Obeyesekere contrasts these 'ethicized' eschatologies with the 'unethicized eschatologies' of tribal societies: the terms are Weber's. By 'unethicized' they mean that these societies tend to portray the afterlife as a replica (if sometimes an inverted one) of society on earth (or vice versa), rather than differentiating it into a realm of positive reward (paradise) or punishment (hell). Obeyesekere notes that in societies with

'unethicized eschatologies' there is an emphasis on returning to terrestrial life rather than transcending it on a permanent basis. Fürer-Haimendorf (1953) and Parrinder (1956) refer to such societies as 'life-affirming' and contrast this to 'life-negating' attitudes of Hindu and Buddhist societies. Both vocabularies carry moral evaluations.

One problem with Obeyesekere's distinction between the Buddhist/Hindu/Jaina concepts of reincarnation as 'ethicized' and tribal concepts (including those of the Inuit and Amerindian) as 'unethicized' is that it masks the fact that tribal eschatologies also contain ethical premises, if different ones from those of the Hindu, Buddhist, Judeo-Christian, and Islamic 'ethicized' religions. Tribal peoples such as the Amerindian and Inuit are not without a set of ethics. The ethics of people with 'unethicized eschatologies' are based on the premise of the equality of human consciousness with that of other species of animals, fish, and fowl. This relates to the most universal aspect of reincarnation belief, the premise that it is necessary for humans to conduct themselves so that those beings whose lives they take in order to live – the fish, fowl, and animals – will choose to reincarnate, to give themselves once again to be the sustenance of human beings. Amerindians and Inuit believe strongly that this will happen only if humans follow the ethics of human/animal interaction and treat these beings with respect and dispatch them so that they can find release in a spirit realm from which they will be reborn.[3]

In contrast to the Buddhist/Hindu/Jaina and Judeo-Christian traditions, for peoples who are hunters and gatherers and fisherfolk there was no injunction that 'thou shalt not kill.' Instead, the ethics of tribal peoples are a set of injunctions about properly respecting the spirit of the life forms that are taken. Among North American Native peoples, the taking of human as well as animal life was not proscribed as a damning act or one that inhibited one's spiritual evolution, but as an act which entailed consequences in both the human/animal and spirit realms for both the person taking the life and the person whose life was taken. I have found that among the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en accusations of killing by witchcraft (another form of intentional killing) are expected to have repercussions not just generation after generation, but reincarnation after reincarnation (Mills 1987, 1988b). Further research is necessary to ascertain to what extent this is true for Amerindians and Inuit generally.

Obeyesekere notes that 'ethicized' and 'unethicized' eschatologies differ in their goals. Individual or personal salvation is posited as the

goal of 'ethicized' eschatologies but not for 'unethicized' eschatologies. However, the 'unethicized' eschatologies of North American peoples are themselves generally cast in the framework of the evolution of and interpenetration of successive worlds (Mills 1982, 1986; Ortiz 1975, Tedlock 1975), and they are often concerned with the evolution of a succession of worlds. These worlds bear a temporal relationship to each other, but they are also interconnected through the process of reincarnation. In a certain sense, the goals of the North American Indian and Inuit cosmologies are no less transcendent than those of the ethicized religions. Whether a 'person' is embodied or not, that is, walking on the earth (the Wet'suwet'en term for being reincarnated) or existing on some other realm (or both), that 'person' is envisaged as an essential ingredient in the interconnected welfare of those living on earth and on the other planes.

Since contact, many North American Natives have adopted some features of the 'ethicized' eschatology of Christianity. All of the peoples described in this volume have been affected by Christianity and have espoused the goal of 'salvation.' In the past twenty years Evangelical Christianity has spread among literate Amerindians and Inuit and has taught its adherents that concepts like reincarnation are 'pagan' and 'of the Devil.' While this has caused some Amerindians to become wary of the subject, literate generations also note the references to reincarnation in the *National Enquirer*, and some have read the works of Edgar Cayce and Shirley MacLaine, and either learn about the subject, or have their Native faith restored by these sources (Mills 1988a). It is difficult to assess whether reincarnation belief has diminished, held its own, or swelled under these influences; my analysis (Mills, 1991) of the cases of reported reincarnation in one particular Gitksan lineage indicates that cases have been reported with about equal frequency today as they were fifty years ago.

Origin of Amerindian and Inuit Reincarnation Belief

If Hindu/Buddhist and Greek reincarnation concepts do not antedate Amerindian ones, what can we say about the origin of Amerindian concepts? I have argued elsewhere (Mills 1986, 1988a) that reincarnation belief fits into the basic shamanic belief that typifies hunting and gathering peoples wherever and whenever they are found and that it was probably part of the most ancient human culture. In the view of Eliade (1964: 7) reincarnation concepts were part of an animistic tradition that antedated shamanic techniques of ecstasy.

As the maps in the Appendix demonstrate, on the North American continent reincarnation belief is found most commonly among the peoples of the Arctic, the western Subarctic, and the Northwest Coast. Perry notes that belief in reincarnation is widespread among the Northern Athapaskan groups, but 'was not particularly important and perhaps not even present in most [Athapaskan] groups of the Pacific Coast or the Southwest. Thus it is not possible to tell whether such a concept is a Proto-Athapaskan derivation lost in the course of migrations, a later introduction from Siberia, or an innovation in the northern region. Beliefs of this sort do occur on both sides of the Bering Strait, and they may represent a later spread of ideas' (Perry 1991: 90–1).

Stevenson (1974, and chapter 14) suggests that the Tlingit belief in reincarnation may have come from diffusion of Siberian reincarnation belief and from the visit of a Chinese Buddhist monk.[4] However, perusal of the maps in the Trait Index (in the Appendix) also shows that reincarnation belief was not exclusive to the Inuit and Na-Dene speakers. Reincarnation belief is reported for the majority of the North American language families.

Greenberg (1987) classifies the languages of North America into three major language families: Amerind, Eskimo-Aleut, and Na-Dene. The evidence supports the general formulation that the Amerind-speaking peoples were the first to occupy the North (and South) American continents, followed by the Na-Dene who were here 10,000 to 12,000 years ago, and then by the Eskimo-Aleut somewhere around 6,000 to 9,000 BP. The implication from the widespread occurrence of reincarnation belief among numerous speakers of Amerind languages is that belief in reincarnation antedated the Na-Dene and Eskimo-Aleut arrival in the New World. If Siberian-Inuit reincarnation concepts reinforced belief in reincarnation among the northern Na-Dene, Siberian shamanism was not the source of all reincarnation belief in North and South America and on other continents, such as Australia and Africa.

If reincarnation belief has its origins in hunter-gathering animism, reincarnation beliefs certainly fit into agricultural societies as well. The renewal of crops season after season affords a powerful metaphor for reincarnation, as Campbell has noted (1949). In 22 of the 130 societies in the Trait Index (in the Appendix), the cultivation of plants was the dominant subsistence technique.[5]

Although this book is confined to North America, reincarnation belief has been reported to some extent among the agricultural Aztec (Schoolcraft 1857: 637–8), Maya (Laughlin 1976), and Inca (Cobo 1990) belief systems. Recent archaeological work has demonstrated that the Huron

agricultural complex was itself influenced by the agricultural developments of central America (Riley, Edging, and Rossen 1990). Concepts of reincarnation in the New World have doubtless continued to be influenced by a number of differing sources such as Siberian shamanism (itself affected by Buddhist belief and practice) and Mesoamerican concepts. The point is that Amerindian reincarnation concepts undoubtedly antedated the Mayan, Aztec, Incan, as well as Buddhist formulations, if they were influenced by them.

Reincarnation and Rebirth Terminology

Because it is so widely associated with the Hindu formulation, reincarnation is perhaps not the appropriate word to use to describe the Amerindian and Inuit beliefs on the topic. I am not sure that 'rebirth' is a great improvement. The term rebirth is typically associated with Buddhism. Buddhism itself has its own internal debates about the part mental inclinations and karma play in rebirth. Buddhism does not talk in terms of the existence of a soul, while Amerindians and Inuit speak of one or a series of souls (see McDermott 1980 for a discussion of Buddhist concepts; Hultkrantz 1953 for Amerindian).

Amerindians and Inuit had and have their own terms for reincarnation. The Kutchin term *natli?* and Dene Tha term *ndaadlinha'* are cognates found widely in Athapaskan languages. How they relate to Inuit and Amerind terms deserves further analysis.

Distribution of Belief in Reincarnation in Native America

The most universal reincarnation belief reported in the ethnographic literature for Amerindians and Inuit, as for tribal peoples elsewhere, is the belief in the power of animals to reincarnate or not on the basis of how they are respected by humans. In research for my doctoral dissertation (Mills 1982), I found that in a sample of ten societies from the ten North American culture areas, all of the societies reported belief in the reincarnation of the animal species whose lives they took (Mills 1986, 1988a). I have not heard of any North American Inuit or Indian society that did not hold such a belief. However, the focus of this book is on human reincarnation, and here the record of Amerindian and Inuit concepts is more varied.

For many Amerindian societies reincarnation is only one of a number of possibilities concerning what may happen to some aspect of the human spirit or soul after death. Different cultures elaborate different

aspects of the complex; for some return is the rule, for some it is the exception, and in some it is not mentioned at all.

The Matlock-Mills Trait Index of Amerindian and Inuit Reincarnation (in the Appendix) lists the 130 societies or subgroups for which belief in some form of human reincarnation has been found to date. The reader is referred to the Trait Index for sources. The maps (also in the Appendix) show the location of the societies listed.[6] Here I will catalogue the Amerindian and Inuit culture areas for which reference to reincarnation has been found to date, and, for some areas, briefly summarize the features of belief. After the review by culture area, I consider various themes which vary in Amerindian and Inuit reincarnation belief.

Inuit and Eskimo

Belief in reincarnation is most prevalent (or at least has been most consistently reported) in the most northerly and the northwestern portion of the continent, that is, among the Inuit, as well as among the Northwest Coast Indians, and the Native peoples of the western subarctic. This distribution corresponds to the areas where the Indians and Inuit have had the best opportunities to maintain their subsistence base and culture, and they have sustained missionary incursions for the shortest period of time.

Inuit culture is not confined to the North American continent: Siberian Inuit are part of the same culture area. The Trait Index, however, includes only the North American references, which show that reincarnation belief has been reported widely in both western, central, and eastern groups. Western groups for whom belief has been reported are the Aleuts, South and North Alaska Eskimo, St Lawrence Islands Eskimo, Diomede Islands (Bering Strait Eskimo), Kotzebue Sound, Chugach (Pacific Eskimo) and Mackenzie Eskimo. Central Inuit groups whose belief about reincarnation has been reported include the Copper Eskimo, Caribou Eskimo, Padlimuit, Netsilik, Aivilik, Iglulik, as well as the Hudson Bay, Baffin, and Labrador Eskimo. The eastern Inuit for whom reincarnation belief has been reported include the Polar Inuit, the West Greenland Inuit, and the East Greenland Inuit.

One of the hallmarks of Inuit reincarnation is the concept of 'name soul': naming a newborn child after a person recently deceased. Wachtmeister's (1956) useful summary of Inuit belief from west to east distinguishes between the custom of naming an infant after a recently deceased person (prevalent among all Inuit groups) and the concept that

the infant is the reincarnation of the namesake. Among groups that endorse the latter concept, it is often reported that the baby is sickly or cries until the parents give it the name of the person it truly is and wants to be recognized as being (a concept reported among the Gitksan as well). Cross-sex reincarnation also typifies the Arctic, and is discussed under that heading below.

Subarctic

Reincarnation belief has been widely reported for the western Subarctic Indians, both those on the Pacific drainage system and on the Mackenzie River drainage system. These peoples speak Athapaskan languages, unrelated to the Eskimo-Aleut. Pacific drainage Subarctic peoples for whom human reincarnation belief has been reported include the Ahtna, Tanana, Koyukon, Tanaina, Kolchan, Tagish, Ingalik, Han, Tutchone, Tahltan, and Carrier (including the Wet'suwet'en).

The Mackenzie drainage Subarctic peoples for whom human reincarnation belief has been reported are the Kutchin, Hare, Bearlake, Kaska, Slavey, Beaver, Dene Tha, Dogrib, and Chipewyan.

The only Mackenzie drainage Subarctic groups for whom we have found no reference are the Chilcotin, Yellowknife, and Mountain Indians. These latter two groups have been little studied, but their beliefs have been noted to be similar to those of the Hare, Slavey, and Chipewyan (Gillespie 1981a: 289–90, 1981b: 336), for whom belief in human reincarnation has been reported. Reincarnation belief is also reported for the Ojibwa, who, like the Cree and the eastern Subartic peoples speak Algonquian languages. The Ojibwa, also referred to as the Chipewa and the Saulteaux, are categorized as Shield and Mackenzie Borderland Subarctic peoples in the Subarctic volume of *Handbook of North American Indians* (Helm 1981). Note that the Northern Ojibwa described by Hallowell (1955) are referred to as Lake Winnipeg Saulteaux by Steinbring (1981: 244).

There is little published information on Western Woods Cree, West Main Cree, or East Cree belief.[7] However, among the Eastern Subarctic groups, reincarnation belief has been reported for the Cree, Naskapi, and Micmac.

Northwest Coast

Among the Northwest Coast peoples, human reincarnation is frequently

reported and is found in all the language families. It has been noted for all of the northern Northwest Coast peoples, that is the Eyak, Haida, Tlingit (as well as the Inland Tlingit), Tsimshian, and Gitksan. We have found no published sources recording Nishga belief, but I have been told of contemporary examples.

Instances of human reincarnation have been reported for the central Northwest Coast (or Wakashan-speaking) groups such as the Kwakiutl (or Kwak'wak'awakw), Oowekeeno, Haisla, Nootka (or Nuu-chal-nulth-aht), Makah, and Bella Bella. The majority of the Kwakiutl cases reported (Boas 1891: 611, 1930: 228; Spradley 1969) concern humans returning as humans, but see below the sections on human-to-animal and salmon- or animal-to-human reincarnation.

Human reincarnation is also reported for some of the southern Northwest Coast groups such as the northern Coast Salish Bella Coola, Comox, Pentlatch, and Klahuse, the central Coast Salish Squamish, Puget Sound, Llu'ngewn (or Straits), and Clallam and the southern Coast Salish Puget Sound, Twana and Upper Skagit Squamish. In addition, belief is apparently reported for the Yurok, a Northwest Coast type society in northern California.

The sections on naming practices and on guardian spirits consider these aspects of Northwest Coast reincarnation concepts.

Plateau

There are a few references to reincarnation belief among the Interior Salish Lillooet, Shuswap, and Thompson from around the turn of the century by Teit, although Boas stated that reincarnation belief was absent in the area. In 1890 Gatschet recorded Klamath belief in transmigration (human to animal), but in 1930 Spier says belief in reincarnation was absent. Curtin (1912) noted naming practices and an oral tradition related to reincarnation among the Modoc.

Great Basin

Mention of reincarnation belief is almost completely absent for the Great Basin culture areas; Lowie has mentioned transmigration (human to animal) only once for the Shoshone. The Prophet and Ghost Dance doctrines, which developed in the Plateau and Great Basin culture areas, emphasized that the living could temporarily join the dead through the trance/dance experience. The prophets also said that eventually the

dead would return to the land of the living. The prophecy that the land of the dead and the land of living Indians would be conjoined may be based on a reincarnation paradigm.

Plains

On the Plains, belief in human reincarnation has been reported for the Blackfoot and Sioux (including the Dakota, Oglala and Teton), as well as for the Iowa, Ponca, Assiniboin, Cheyenne, Hidatsa, Mandan, and Arapaho. There are more cases of human reincarnation mentioned than of transmigration. Several Plains societies, including the Mandan, say humans were stars before birth. Twins in particular are thought to be reborn among the Dakota. The Plains societies often describe the role of birthmarks as signalling a deceased warrior returned.

Prairies

In the Prairies region we find mention of reincarnation belief for the Fox, and Winnebago (see Radin below). Note that the Prairie societies with reincarnation belief are close to the Ojibwa/Saulteax/Chipewa belief. People recalling a previous life as a human and transmigration from human to animal are mentioned.

The East

In the east, the area for which we have the earliest recorded mention of reincarnation, belief has been reported for the Huron, Iroquois, Oneida, Algonquins, Delaware (Lenape), Powhatan, and Potawatomi. In the southeast, we find mention of reincarnation belief for the Cherokee, Creek, Seminole, Yuchi, Chitimacha, and Natchez. Belief in the northeast tends to involve return of children who die; some of the few cases cited in the central and southern area involve verbal claims and birthmarks.

California

Kroeber, the founder of California ethnography and its most eminent practitioner to date, was aware of the existence of the concept of human reincarnation among the Northwest Coast Twana as studied by Elmendorf (1960: 519), and he comments on the comparative absence

among the Yurok, who are one of the most southerly Northwest Coast cultures, located in northern California. However, the apparent mention of reincarnation belief among the Yurok by Thompson (1916: 74), herself a native, suggests that the concept may have been present but overlaid with Christian concepts of the second coming so that it was not presented to Kroeber in such a way that he noticed it as a significant belief.

Most of the references to reincarnation for California concern humans being reborn or transformed after death into animals (I comment on this in the section on human-to-animal transmigration below). However, Hudson (1902) relates several Yokut Orpheus myths from three different locations, two of which include statements about babies coming back across the bridge to the Land of the Dead to be reborn.

Southwest

Among the natives of the Southwest, the pueblo dwellers, southern Athapaskans (Apache and Navaho), and others, there are numerous mentions of the concept of human reincarnation. Among the Hopi belief in human reincarnation has been reported by a variety of anthropologists. The cross-gender aspect is discussed below. Reincarnation is also reported for Jemez, and for the Keresan Cochiti, Santa Ana, and Zia.

Among the Mohave, belief in human reincarnation was described at the end of the nineteenth century by Bourke (1892: 470) and later and more completely by Devereux (1937, 1941, 1961). Reincarnation has also been described among the Cocopa, River Yumans, and Maricopa.

Among the Navaho belief in reincarnation of humans is best documented by Haile (1943). Farella (1984) makes many references to the concept of reincarnation of life forms, but does not mention human reincarnation. Proskauer, Barsh, and Johnson (1980) report a case of a birthmark which related to a death of a Navaho in a particular massacre, but the case is never treated in terms of reincarnation belief. Belief in human reincarnation has also been reported for the Western and Chiricahua Apache (see also Perry 1991). Cochise and Griffith (1971) report an interesting case in which a war hero was said to be reborn.

The Karankawa (on the Gulf of Mexico coast in what is now Texas) are reported (Long 1791: 60) to have mourned the birth and celebrated the death of children, 'because they look upon death only as a journey from whence he will return, but with regard to his birth, they consider it an entrance into a life of perils and misfortunes.'

Various Themes in Amerindian and Inuit Reincarnation Belief

Although there are numerous references to reincarnation belief in nine out of the ten culture areas, there is considerable variation as to whether reincarnation is thought to be a usual or an exceptional occurrence, whether humans are thought to be able to reincarnate in the opposite sex, whether people are thought to be able to reincarnate simultaneously in several different people (and whether one human is believed to be able to be simultaneously the reincarnation of two people), or whether humans are said to come back as animals. Reincarnation also relates to kinship, concepts of guardian spirits, naming procedures, and concepts of the nature of the child/self/human. I will review some of the variation of reincarnation thought as it relates to these different themes among Amerindian and Inuit peoples.

Reincarnation as General Principle or Specific Instance

As one moves from the northwest towards the southern regions of North America, there tends to be less information on whether human reincarnation is viewed as a process that encompasses all births. In some instances, as among the Huron as described by von Gernet below, reincarnation is mentioned particularly in connection with the rebirth of a baby or child who died at an early age. Wissler (1912: 18) mentions this category for the Blackfoot and also adds that 'The still-born, it is believed, will be born again,' although he also notes that warriors killed in battle are also expected to be reborn and recognized by their birthmarks (Wissler 1912: 28). The Hopi Sun Chief (Simmons 1942) believed that the same child was reborn to him and his wife four times. Slobodin (this volume) gives an example from the Kutchin in which the deceased child's journey to the land of the dead and to Jesus resembles some of the features of 'near-death experiences' (Owens, Cook, and Stevenson 1990), except that the child did not revive in the same body, but came back in a different one. Teit's references to rebirth among Plateau peoples tend to be related to children being reborn. I have described how a Beaver Indian prophet mourned the death of his son until the prophet received a vision assuring him that his son would be reborn to him (Mills 1988a: 52). However, for the Beaver reincarnation cases were not restricted to replacing children in the same family.

To date there are nineteen references in the Trait Index (in the Appendix) to the idea that children only are reborn, and four references to the concept that children are particularly likely to be reborn. However,

rebirth is certainly not restricted to children. There are several references to the concept that babies born with teeth, or children who have or develop gray hair, are old people come back.

In many instances cited in the literature, the specific examples are of children or adults who died prematurely, violently, or unexpectedly. Stevenson (1974, 1975a, 1987) and Cook, Pasricha, Samararatne, Maung, and Stevenson (1983) have noted the high incidence of violent death in reported cases of reincarnation found not only among North American Indians, but also in cases reported from numerous cultures throughout the world.

In short, the most universal feature of reincarnation belief in North America is the belief that children who die may be reborn into the same families; a related belief is that warriors who die may be reborn and known from birthmarks corresponding to their wounds. Both are instances of premature death. With the possible exception of the Inuit, some western Subarctic and some Northwest Coast peoples, there is seldom a firm expectation that all humans will be reborn again on earth.

Cross-Sex Reincarnation

Belief in the possibility of a person being reborn in the opposite sex is reported most often for the Inuit and the peoples of the western Subarctic. Fifty per cent of the twenty Subarctic (Inuit, Eskimo, and Aleut) societies in the Trait Index report belief in cross-sex reincarnation, as compared with thirty-two per cent of the twenty-five Western Subarctic societies. In the Western Subarctic, the percentage of cross-sex reincarnation is higher (forty per cent) for the ten Mackenzie Subarctic than for the Pacific Drainage societies, of which four out of fifteen (twenty-seven per cent) have a belief in reincarnation recorded. Outside the subarctic and Arctic, cross-sex reincarnation is recorded only for the Tlingit, the Kwakiutl, and the Hopi.

Regarding Inuit belief Saladin d'Anglure (chapter 6) describes cross-gender reincarnation, as well as the Inuit belief about the malleability of gender definition, while Nuttall (chapter 8) describes how the West Greenland Inuit abandoned cross-gender naming after adopting Danish names, while retaining many aspects of the name soul complex. Saladin d'Anglure notes that Inuit shamans are particularly likely to be cited as examples of someone who was of the opposite gender in his or her previous life. Cross-dressing until puberty is typical of such cross-gender reincarnation cases.

Regarding Mackenzie Subarctic cross-sex reincarnation, Slobodin

reports that fifty per cent of the cases among the Kutchin were of the sex change type. This is the highest proportion of cross-gender reincarnation reported anywhere in the world, and higher than the thirteen per cent among the Beaver (Mills 1988a: 396; Stevenson 1986: 211). Goulet (1988) has also reported cross-gender reincarnation among the Dene Tha.

Boas (1891: 614; 1930) reports two cases of cross-gender reincarnation among the Kwakiutl. In one, an elderly lady asked a chief if she might return to him as his child and asked that he decide whether she should return as a boy or a girl. I have encountered a single case among the Gitksan, who nonetheless say that cross-gender reincarnation does not occur (Mills 1988a, 1988b). De Laguna (1954, 1972) and Emmons (1991) report cross-gender reincarnation, citing cases, for the Tlingit.

The other place where cross-gender reincarnation is reported is among the Hopi, who believe that children who are reborn necessarily return as the opposite gender. The Hopi Sun Chief mentioned above (Simmons 1942), reported that his child reborn four times alternated gender each time.

Whether the presence of hermaphrodites or *berdache* among the Plains Indians is related in Native thought to a previous existence as a member of the opposite gender has not, to my knowledge, as yet been explored.

Multiple Simultaneous Reincarnation

Belief in the possibility that one person can return in or as several people at once, or multiple simultaneous reincarnation, is most widely reported for the Inuit and for some of the Northwest Coast peoples (this trait is called DR–divided reincarnation in the Trait Index). Among the Inuit the same person is sometimes said to be reborn in different communities. Freuchen (1961) mentions multiple reincarnation among the Polar Inuit, Carpenter (1954) among the Aivilik, and Holm (1914) among the Angmagsalik or East Greenland Inuit.

Among the northern Northwest Coast peoples, contemporary belief in multiple reincarnation of the same person in the same community is common. Belief in multiple simultaneous reincarnation has been reported for the Haida (Blackman 1982, Stevenson 1974), Tlingit (de Laguna 1972), and Gitksan (Mills 1988a, 1988b). It has also been reported for the Coast Salish (Mills 1988a: 44). On the northwest coast the belief in multiple simultaneous reincarnation also reflects that many people would like to have a highly esteemed person return in their midst. It is

often considered impolitic to deny the claim of one's lineage members that the esteemed individual has also returned to their midst.

Boas (1920: 115-16; 1925: 99) and Hunt noted that some Kwakiutl chiefs held big names in more than one house; indeed Boas records one chief who held names in five houses. This occurred after the great population decline following contact when there were not enough qualified bearers to hold these high positions (Goldman 1975: 38). It is possible that the concept of multiple simultaneous reincarnation, that is, that a person could be simultaneously the reincarnation of several different people, became more common at this time. The concept that the predeceasing holders of a name invest the new holder with their power and persona might have fostered this usage. Matlock suggests (1990a: 15) that the dynamics that produced multiple big names of high chiefs prompted giving multiple birth names as well. However, it should be noted that naming practices and population decline and recovery occurred widely and beyond the Northwest Coast, and these same population dynamics do not appear to have generated belief in multiple simultaneous rebirth beyond the Northwest Coast peoples and the Inuit.

The Tanana, a Subarctic people positioned between the Inuit and the Northwest Coast, are apparently the only people outside the Inuit and Northwest Coast culture areas for whom, to date, there is a report of multiple simultaneous reincarnation (McKennan 1959: 160).

Kinship

Somersan (1984), using a world-wide sample, reported that reincarnation belief is more common among matrilineal than patrilineal and bilateral societies. However, in North America, reincarnation beliefs are equally integral to the eschatology of peoples who are not matrilineal, such as the Kwakiutl, and to peoples who are patrilineal such as the Winnebago, Ojibwa, Fox, Iowa, Yuchi, and Algonquin. Outside of North America, the Hindu and Buddhist societies, with 'ethicized' belief in reincarnation, are patrilineal.

Reincarnation is certainly not restricted to societies of any single kind of kinship pattern. Descent was coded for 115 of the 130 societies in the Trait Index, either by Driver (1964) or by Murdock (1965), or both. Of these 115 Amerindian or Inuit societies, 66 have bilateral descent, 33 have matrilineal descent, and 16 have patrilineal descent.[8]

The Pueblo and Northwest Coast sociological concept that human

beings return to take the same names and positions in the kinship system greatly impressed Mauss (1938/1985). Despite Mauss, however, anthropologists have seldom noted how kinship systems and terminology relate to indigenous concepts of re-embodiment or reincarnation.

Whether the society is matri- or patrilineal or has bilateral descent, reincarnation takes place so as to perpetuate the system, typically so that wife-giving and wife-taking groups are the same, reincarnation after reincarnation. For example, McClellan has pointed out that reincarnation takes place among the Tagish, a matrilineal people, so that humans remain related to one another in the same kind of way in successive lives, echoing the rules of exogamy. She says,

> Nineteenth century individuals tried to make the exact same marriages as did their predecessors who bore the same personal names, so that members of the two clans would forever be linked together in an identical manner. This was thought to be possible because ideally the pool of clan names and accompanying statuses remained constant. What changed externally were the persons who temporarily held these names and their prerogatives while alive, and those who held the same names but who had died. Because the Tagish believed in reincarnation, all these persons really represented the same social individual in a system that thus incorporated the living and the dead indissolubly (McClellan 1981: 487).

Among the Beaver Indians, Subarctic Athapaskans of the Mackenzie River drainage, I have found this same principle maintained in the reincarnation cases they cite: one returns so as to be able to marry (and not marry) the same categories of people. Note that in both the Beaver (bilateral) and the Tlingit (matrilineal) situation, cross-cousin marriage preserves marriageable/unmarriageable categories, reincarnation after reincarnation.

I suggest that mourning rites and taboos of widows may have implicit reincarnation concerns at their core: for a widow to be sexually active soon after her husband's death would attract her deceased husband to be reborn as her son/child, which would bring him back in a position in which she, or her reincarnation, could not marry him (see Harkin 1990). Taboos on naming the dead, found widely in North America, often relate to reincarnation considerations. However, reincarnation is not always between kinsmen. I have noted a case in which one Gitksan elder is said to have been reborn as a child whose parents are non-Native. Slobodin documents (this volume) numerous Kutchin cases

of a non-Native being reborn in their midst. In these cases the Kutchin have apparently appropriated into their kinship system people who were originally outside it.

Guardian Spirit and Totems

Reincarnation among both lineal societies, like the northern Northwest Coast peoples, and among ambilineal totemic peoples like the Kwakiutl, preserves the relationship of the person not only to wife-givers and wife-takers, but to the totems of the lineage, which act as guardian spirits for the lineage members. As noted above, only when there is no one to take an honoured name is it considered appropriate to adopt someone from another lineage to assume the crests and titles (and territories) of someone outside one's natal house or lineage. Totems in lineal and ambilineal societies function as explicit and publicly acknowledged guardians and identity markers, and titles are seen as power bringers, although individual powers may also be sought. Secret societies tend to oversee vision quests in lineal and ambilineal societies, because such societies are likely to have communities large enough so that there are a number of shaman specialists to oversee the training and initiation of the multiple novices. However, guardian spirits are equally important in the smaller, band level societies, where vision quests tend to be undertaken and supervised individually (Mills 1982).

In the small nomadic societies in the Mackenzie Subarctic, such as the Beaver, as in the Plateau area, animal guardian spirits are considered to be both private protectors and mirrors of each individual's particular qualities and personality traits (Mills 1982, 1986). It is generally expected among the Beaver that a person will have the same personality traits as well as skills in a succeeding life. Ray (1939) has noted that for natives in the Plateau and the surrounding interior areas, the identity of one's animal guardian spirit is a carefully concealed secret, because to boast of one's power source is to lose it. Upon a person's death, Ray says that the guardian spirit may (1) die also, (2) be passed to a living relative, or (3) continue its guardianship from the spirit realm. In these cultures greater emphasis is placed on an individual vision quest to contact a guardian spirit.

Wachtmeister (1956) summarizes much of the Inuit material which indicates that the person for whom an infant is named acts as a kind of guardian spirit for the child, particularly until the child has reached puberty. Rasmussen (1932: 219) says, 'But human beings are continually

being named after one another, generation after generation and with each new naming the number of names increases and thus at last forms a long chain of protectors, which unseen follow the one that bears the name, are with him, work inside him, keep danger away and become his guardian spirits.' Whether a person would be expected to re-acquire, or to have always had, the same guardian spirit animals in successive lives is a question which has not yet been adequately investigated.

Naming Procedures and Reincarnation

Among Amerindians and Inuit the naming of a newborn child after a deceased relative because the baby is thought to be animated by the deceased relative occurs in both band-level egalitarian societies and in societies with differentiation of rank and title.

In many Amerindian and Inuit cultures a person is typically given a succession of different names at different stages of life. Rubel and Rosman (1983: 10) reconstruct Eyak naming practice in a way that suggests that names can both reflect reincarnation and/or provide a kind of guardian spirit protection for a child from a deceased and not yet reincarnated relative.

Judging from my experience with the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en, throughout a person's life, he or she will be given successively more illustrious names, depending on whether the qualities of the incumbent justify the expense of successive potlatches and on the ability of the family to finance the potlatches necessary to confer a new name. The identification of a newborn child with a deceased ancestor is more prevalent than insistence that the 'come-back' receive all of the hereditary clan names held by the predecessor, or previous personality. Since the final feast name of the person one is said to be reborn from is passed on to an adult at his or her death, it is possible that the subsequently born person who is identified as the reincarnation never inherits the ultimate feast name.

Human-to-Animal and Animal-to-Human Reincarnation

A tally from the Trait Index of Amerindian and Inuit Reincarnation References shows that there are almost four times more references to humans returning as humans than references to humans being transformed into animals after death. At the latest count, there were 279 references of human-to-human reincarnation and 77 references to

humans being transformed into animals after death or having been animals before birth. Of these 77 references to human-to-animal transmigration, 38 occurred in the absence of reference to human-to-human rebirth. There are also 11 references to what we are calling 'metempsychosis' in the Trait Index, or humans being transformed into an animal at death and then being reborn again as a human.[9]

Boas (1896: 579) notes that Kwakiutl land hunters are said to return as wolves, while sea hunters are said to return as killer whales, and common people as owls or ghosts.[10] Boas also recorded that among the Kwakiutl human twins are thought to be salmon returned and are thought to become salmon after their death. He cites a birthmark on a woman which was said to correspond to the wound where the salmon was speared (Boas 1932b: 203).[11] Harkin (chapter 12, this volume) cites Olson's evocative example of Ooweekeno belief that human twins were/are salmon.

Devereux (1961) notes that among the Mohave, shamans and twins are particularly likely to be reborn, while Bourke (1892: 181) reports, 'After death Mohaves become spirits, then they again become a kind of owl; a second time they turn into a different kind of owl; and a third time into still another; fourthly they become water beetles; and after that they turn into air.'

This Mohave belief is reminiscent of the Zuni who say that humans are generally expected to take four births before recycling through four worlds in animal or insect form (Tedlock 1975: 270; Young 1988: 99, 117, 125–7, 163). As they do so, they become increasingly imbued with power.

In many instances coded 'transmigration' (human-to-animal transformation) in the Trait Index, it is not clear whether it is thought that the deceased person has entered an animal on a temporary basis and may again manifest as a human. The literature on North American Indians is replete with accounts of individuals transforming themselves temporarily into animals, spirit or tangible, which is a separate (if conceptually closely related) concept to that of reincarnation.

Reference to humans becoming animals after their death – in the absence of mention of the possibility of humans being reborn as humans – occurs most frequently among the California Indians. The Pomo are reported as saying that a bad person returns as a grizzly bear or as a rattlesnake (Powers 1877: 161). Rasmussen (1927) and Turner (chapter 5, this volume) report the concept that bad people are reincarnated as animals among the Inuit (and Inupiaq). One wonders whether

the Pomo belief in human-to-animal reincarnation implied an earlier belief in human-to-human reincarnation (very much present among the Inuit) and/or whether the belief represents a syncretism of Christian belief in after-life punishment and aboriginal ideas of transformation. This seems likely because one of the basic premises of North American Indian and Inuit cultures is that animal life forms are as sentient and evolved as human. That animals can be guardian spirits itself testifies to the intimate, protective, and benevolent qualities with which Amerindians and Inuit endow the animal world. The Kwakiutl concept that land hunters become wolves and sea hunters become killer whales has not been construed as punishment, but as an expression of the intimacy of identification of humans and the beings whose lives they take. Presumably the rebirth of a hunter in these forms is an intermediary state, as is rebirth into an owl or as a ghost. In 1896 Boas said that Kwakiutl hunters reincarnated as humans after spending some time as wolves and whales, although in his 1921 account the subsequent reincarnation as a human is not mentioned.

Among the Beaver, human souls are sometimes said to take temporary refuge in a bird before moving on towards the 'trail to heaven.' Alternatively, the soul sometimes is said to appear in the guise of its guardian animal such as a grizzly bear, particularly if the deceased died in such a way that he or she cannot find the path to heaven (Mills field notes 1984). Careful research may elucidate the relation between personality traits associated with guardian-spirit animals, the personality of a human, and the anticipated continuity of that personality after death and into rebirth.

Child-rearing, Psychology, Self

One of the reasons it is useful to draw attention to Amerindian and Inuit reincarnation concepts is that reincarnation belief affects concepts of what a person and what a child is. We have encountered aspects of this already in looking at naming procedures: in many societies the name implies being, or at least being protected by, the former holder and/or the lineage ancestors and totems. In status-conscious societies such as the Northwest Coast peoples, to be a high chief reborn gives the newborn so designated a redoubtable persona. However, in band-level societies where gradations of rank and status are much less marked, where to be a human being is to be a 'real person,' the concept of reincarnation also subtly influences the way babies and children are

treated. I have observed how a young child was listened to as a medicine woman when her aged father, a renowned medicine man, lay ill and dying. Her understanding of what was happening to her father was believed to be based on her shamanic and intuitive powers which had been honed in previous lives.

The concept of education as a gentle reawakening of memory laid down before and the concept that watching something done suffices as instruction pervade much of Amerindian and Inuit educational philosophy, and stand in contrast to Western educational premises. This is true whether the child says he/she has (or is said to have) conscious memories of a previous life, whether she/he is raised on the basis of being a particular person reborn, as in the case of Anauta (Washburne and Anauta 1940), and also when the child is not identified with any previous person at all. Hymes has noted (1964) that the Chinook (for whom belief in reincarnation has not been recorded) say that infants have a language other than Chinookan and that if they are not treated well they will go back to the place from which they came. Hymes notes that certain persons are understood to have the ability to understand this other language and interpret the baby's wishes.[12]

The ability to understand the language of infants is also present in societies with clearly expressed concepts of reincarnation. Elsewhere (Mills 1991) I have recounted some cases of babies whose wishes, based on previous lives, were discerned by shamans who had this ability to understand the speech of infants. The Chinookan concepts of infant language may relate to the deep structure of the reincarnation complex. Later in this volume I explore concepts of self related to cases of Northwest Coast children noted as being lineage members reborn.

In the future I hope to document more fully the ontogeny of such cases, to document in ways analogous to the work of Miller (1982), Miller and Sperry (1988), Miller, Potts, Fung, Hoogstra, and Mintz (1990), and Ochs and Schieffelin (1979, 1984), how a child is taught the vocabulary of reincarnation, how the caretakers come to decide the child is a case of reincarnation, and how this is communicated and learned by the child.

Notes

1 Interestingly, in the earliest Hindu scripts there is no mention of rebirth, but only of death and an afterlife paralleling the earthly one (kings are kings in life and in the other realm), and then only gradually were there

references to an end of life, a death, in this other realm. The concept of rebirth first became articulated in the two great Hindu epics, the Ramayana and the Bhagavad Gita (O'Flaherty 1980).

2 Stevenson (1980) has described belief in and cases of reincarnation among two Shi'ite Moslem groups, for example, the Alevi of Turkey and the Druse of Lebanon. I have reported on the less commonly reported cases among the (largely) Sunni Moslem population of India (Mills in press, 1990a, 1990b).

3 Walens (1981) has elaborated this relationship among the Kwakiutl, and Seguin (1984, 1985) for the Tsimshian, noting that the prime goal of the potlatch is for humans to comport themselves properly 'lest there be no salmon.'

4 Anthropologists are increasingly recognizing the importance of a circumpolar culture area, which includes both Inuit and Siberian counterparts (Fitzhugh and Crowell 1988). Inuit belief should be seen in the context of Siberian belief, and vice versa. We have not included Siberian reincarnation references in the Trait Index, because they are strictly speaking not North American, but it should be noted that the Arctic culture area properly includes the Siberian Inuit along with the Inuit on the American continent.

5 Game was the dominant type of subsistence for 46 of the 130 societies; fish for 35; game and fish for 9; wild plants for 9; and a combination of game and wild plants for 9. This classification is based on Map 3 of Driver's (1964) classification of dominant types of subsistence, prepared by Driver and Massey.

6 Note that the Inuit/Eskimo, Pacific Drainage/Yukon Subarctic, Northwest Coast, and California culture areas in the Trait Index (in the Appendix) begin with citations that either refer to the area in general, do not specify to which particular society they refer, and/or refer to several groups at once. Therefore these references are not given a specific number in the maps, as are the individually mentioned societies. The general listings for Pacific Drainage/Yukon Subarctic come under the heading 'Northern Athapaskan (general)' because the Pacific Drainage and Mackenzie Subarctic peoples are all Northern Athapaskan speakers, members of the Na Dene language family.

7 Irene Sullivan has reported to me that the Swampy Cree mentioned that the victim of a tragic accident was reincarnated.

8 Driver's Map 23 prepared by Driver and Massey was used, as well as Columns 20, 22, and 24 from Murdock (1965). These two sources agreed in all cases except the Micmac. In Murdock the Micmac are considered bi-

lateral, whereas they are coded as having patrilineal sibs in Murdock. I have left the Carrier as bilateral, although the Wet'suwet'en and Tatla Lake Carrier are certainly matrilineal.

9 Note that this is a crude way of calculating the relative frequency of human-to-human, human-to-animal, or animal-to-human-to-animal rebirth. In some instances the different sources may be referring to the same case, or at least to the same belief among the same culture. I have not yet calculated these frequencies by culture alone.

10 Note the similarity to the Mohave concept that humans return as varying types of owls for four births/lives. Owls and ghosts are closely associated in Kwakiutl thought, as owls herald the death of a human by hooting (see Boas 1896: 579, Craven 1967).

11 Spencer and Gillen (1904) report a similar association of birthmark on a human resulting from the spear mark the totem animal received before it took birth as a human. The Kwakiutl example differs in that salmon are not totem animals, as was the animal cited in the Australian Aborigine case.

12 Hymes (personal communication) found that Jacobs's field notes on the Clackamas and Boas's field notes from his work with the Cultee (Kathlamet, Shoalwater) report that some people have the ability to understand the speech of infants. Bourke (1892: 470) cites Long as recording that 'the medicine-men of the Otoe, Omaha, and others along the Missouri pretended to be able to converse with the fetus in utero and predict the sex.' De Laguna (1972: 775) cites a Tlingit case in which a baby was said to talk after his birth, and ask for 'his partner. He wonder if his partner's born, too. The same day his partner is born, asked where he is. So they put those babies together. They talking to each other.'

ALEXANDER VON GERNET

3 Saving the Souls: Reincarnation Beliefs of the Seventeenth-Century Huron

ABSTRACT. The earliest detailed observations on the beliefs of Native peoples of North America were recorded by Jesuit missionaries among the Huron.The process of 'saving souls' necessitated a comprehension of Huron vocabulary and native conceptualizations of life and afterlife. The Jesuits, who were among the most educated men of Europe, happened to be authorities on eschatology and had a genuine interest in understanding Huron religion. Unfortunately, their language and ideology were fettered by a unitary concept of the soul derived from Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. This essay illustrates the difficulties encountered when a pluralistic Amerindian soul theory is described in terms of a unitary concept. It also suggests that, despite the defects inherent in this early ethnohistoric literature, it is possible to sketch the general outlines of seventeenth-century Huron ideas of the afterlife. The most salient of these ideas involved the apportionment of the persona into a plurality of 'souls' or soul aspects, some of which could penetrate the boundary between death and life. Among the Huron, there were three possible means by which souls of the deceased could be 'saved' so that they could re-enter the realm of the living. It is concluded that the eschatology of this group may, with some caveats, be described as a type of reincarnation belief. As such, it not only adds to the evidence for such beliefs among Amerindians, but gives temporal depth to the ethnographic examples given in the rest of this volume.

> *It is amusing to hear them speak of their souls ... They think of the soul as divisible, and you would have all the difficulty in the world to make them believe that our soul is entire in all parts of the body ... God of truth, what ignorance and stupidity!*
> Jesuit reaction to Amerindian beliefs about life after death

> *Be silent; thou hast no sense; thou askest things which thou dost not know thyself.*
> Native response to missionary inquiries on the same subject[1]

In his influential *De Anima*, Aristotle defined 'soul' as the substantial form of a natural body. The soul, he believed, was united with the body to form the indivisible unit comprising each individual, and it required the material element to exist. While he assigned three different functions or powers to the soul (nutritive, sensitive, and reasonable), he offered what was essentially a unitary theory in which the soul could not be separated into parts (Spicer 1934; Wijsenbeek-Wijler 1978: 65–123). As a thirteenth-century peripatetic, Thomas Aquinas concurred with the Aristotelian suggestion that the soul was the substantial form of the body and that it was completely immaterial (Bobik 1965: 138–47; Brennan 1941: 3–9, 47). Through the work of Aquinas, Aristotelian logic, soul-theory, and other areas of classical metaphysics made a puissant impression on Catholic theology in the waning years of the Middle Ages.

By the seventeenth century the Jesuits had established themselves as the schoolmasters of Europe and were actively moulding contemporary thought by imbedding a traditional scholasticism within a humanistically oriented curriculum. The *Ratio Studiorum*, a standardized code of detailed regulations governing instruction, placed Aristotle and Aquinas at the top of the Jesuit 'reading list' (Fitzpatrick 1933: 23–4, 167–74; Fülöp-Miller 1930: 158–9, 407–8; Harney 1941: 192–203). Hence, the Aristotelian-Thomist *Weltanschauung* was widely discussed in the *collèges* and among the educated nobility.

A nagging problem with the scholastic view of the soul was that it was difficult to reconcile it with the Christian doctrine of transcendence of the spirit. After all, if the soul was dependent on matter, it would have no knowledge of the sensible world after death and would have no means to exist if the body disintegrated. Aquinas had attempted to circumvent the inconsistency with the rather unsatisfactory argument that a permanent sensory deprivation was prevented by a reunification of soul and body on Resurrection Day. René Descartes, one of the Jesuits' most controversial pupils, offered a convenient solution to this uncomfortable orthodoxy by purging the European soul of its vegetative and sensitive functions and redefining it as 'mind.' This mind, he argued, was an essence which could, when disembodied, maintain its

independent powers (Rée 1974: 98–9, 108–9). The Cartesian redefinition added yet another layer of denotations to a complex semantic domain that had already obfuscated the meanings of *spiritus*, *anima*, *mens*, and *intellectus*. Part of the quandary was that the Christian (Paulinian) trilogy of flesh, soul, and spirit had become entangled with the definitions of classical philosophy (Chenu 1964: 100–2).

At the very time that Descartes was pointing to the inadequacies of orthodox definitions of the soul, and French academic institutions were guiding students through the Counter Reformation, the Jesuits were exercising their mandate to proselytize in remote regions of the world. The operation was envisioned through military and agricultural metaphor: this was a 'war' against satanic forces, with the goal being a 'harvest of souls' (Axtell 1985: 90–127). In the battle against what they perceived to be malevolent forces, the Jesuits were armed with formidable intellectual weapons. The missionaries who travelled to the dense forests of Canada were among the most educated men of Europe. All had studied philosophy, theology, metaphysics, rhetoric, and other subjects for at least six years, and many had taught these topics in prestigious colleges (Kennedy 1950: 83–4; Talbot 1956: 4–10; Trigger 1976: 469). With the aid of Aristotelian syllogisms they argued with Amerindian shamans and chiefs and attempted to convert them to Christianity through a massive reorientation of behaviour and belief.[2]

A successful 'harvest of souls' was possible only if the linguistic baggage brought from Europe could be translated into roughly equivalent Amerindian terminology, so that the metaphysical concepts in the parent ideologies could be compared and contrasted. This not only necessitated a comprehensive understanding of native vocabulary, but also prompted an endless series of enquiries about native conceptualizations of life and afterlife. In 1637 (the same year that saw the appearance of Descartes' *Discourse on Method*), Jean de Brébeuf's account on 'The Ideas of the Hurons Regarding the Nature and Condition of the Soul, Both in This Life and After Death' was published in a *Relation* compiled by his superiors (Le Jeune 1637). This was one of several surveys prepared during Brébeuf's tenure as missionary in Huronia, and was an endeavour to familiarize his superiors and other readers with the difficulties faced in his labours in the forest, as well as a desire to illuminate the 'false' Huron ideology so that its departure from the 'true' Aristotelian-Thomist eschatology could be highlighted.

It is a profound irony of history that our understanding of Huron

notions of life and death has been greatly enhanced by the missionaries whose primary goal was to eradicate these beliefs and replace them with Christian ideas on the fate of the soul. Fortunately, the Jesuits were skilled observers and writers, and their efforts to redefine what it meant to be Huron inadvertently preserved many traces of precontact native ideology. Their *Relations* contain the earliest detailed observations in North America on native conceptions of the 'self,' and offer the reader one of those rare occasions where there is certainty that such conceptions had not been affected by prior European proselytization.

The discussion to follow is based principally on the original observations made by Brébeuf (Thwaites 1896–1901: X: 141–57, 267–303), several other primary documents (Thwaites 1896–1901: XV: 183; XVII: 161; XXIII: 165–9; Wrong 1939: 205–14), and a meritorious secondary literature.[3] The goal is to examine these writings to see if any of the seventeenth-century Huron ideas on the relationship between life and death are homologous to 'reincarnation' as this concept is known in modern parlance.

The Huron Souls

In his magisterial thesis on *Conceptions of the Soul Among North American Indians*, Åke Hultkrantz (1953) offered a classificatory system intended to organize the complexity of Amerindian notions of the persona or 'self.' Hultkrantz recognized a basic dualism involving a distinction between body-souls and free-souls. Body-souls were further divided into life-souls and ego-souls, with the latter comprising an emotive-soul and an intellect-soul. Free-souls were subdivided into specific and psychological souls. Subtle conceptual nuances among certain groups necessitated even finer divisions, definitions, and labels such as naguals, double-gangers, and guardian-souls. Many of these souls were not only material, but were capable of becoming completely external potencies. At the death of the body some ceased to exist, while others sprang into existence.

In perusing Hultkrantz's 500-page overview, one gains an appreciation of the difficulties that must have confronted the Jesuits who, despite their analytical skills, were fettered by a unitary or monistic concept of the soul, and by the Christian doctrine that this single entity had a linear trajectory from life to afterlife. The Huron did not, of course, recognize the entire array of divisions that characterized the Amerindian soul complex. Nevertheless, the missionaries were forced

to apply a single overriding rubric (*l'âme* or 'soul') to denote what was clearly a variegated spectrum of discrete Huron concepts.[4] Fortunately, Brébeuf found the many different native names for these concepts 'amusing' and recorded them for his readers, together with several maladroit, albeit revealing definitions. For example, the name for a soul possessed of reason was glossed: 'like a demon counterfeiting a demon' (Thwaites 1896–1901: X: 141).

The problem of understanding Huron eschatology is primarily a semantic one, and it is therefore not surprising that the most satisfactory analysis of Huron soul-theory has been accomplished by an ethnolinguist. John Steckley (1978) recognized that the Huron terms contained in early dictionaries and the voluminous writings of missionaries might yield an emically comprehended soul-schema that could be roughly translated into a modified version of Hultkrantz's etic classification. Judging by the number of terms, and looking beyond the circumlocutory definitions supplied by the Jesuits, it becomes apparent that the Huron believed a living person could have as many as five or more 'souls.' According to Steckley's analysis, the general body-soul was represented by *,aata*, the general life-soul by *onnhek8i*, the emotive soul by *eiachi-*, the intellect soul by *-ndi,onr-*, and several free-souls by *oki*. Mary Druke, who was unfamiliar with either Steckley's contribution or much of the primary literature on which it was based, preferred to regard many of these souls as 'faculties of one metaphysical aspect of being' which she called 'consciousness' and equated with 'personhood' (Druke 1980: 60). It is, however, important to maintain the conceptual distinctions implicit in the Huron language itself.

The 'souls' of the living need not be scrutinized in the present discussion. It suffices to say that parts of the total persona had the ability to become detached, enjoy varying degrees of autonomy, visit remote places (including the land of the dead), and assume the bodily shapes of animals or other beings. This most often occurred during the dreams, visions, and intentionally induced altered states of consciousness which played a prominent role in Iroquoian life (Blanchard 1982: 80–4; Lex 1977; von Gernet and Timmins 1987: 38–42; von Gernet 1992). Such soul-flight is typical of the configuration of belief systems known as shamanism (Eliade 1964: 139–44; Furst 1977: 2). Frequently associated with soul-flight is metamorphosis or transformation – a pervasive theme in the Eastern Woodlands (Tooker 1979: 26–7; Hamell 1987: 77–8), and among Iroquoian-speaking peoples in particular (Parker 1924: 49, 59;

von Gernet and Timmins 1987: 39–40). Since the identity of the individual is maintained regardless of his or her new corporeal form (Druke 1980: 62), the process may be described as a kind of pre-mortem, temporary transmigration.

A death among the Huron was followed by the rites of separation, transition, and incorporation which are found in most cultures around the world (van Gennep 1960: 146–65). Customarily, an elaborate funeral took place at a cemetery near the village. The corpse was carefully wrapped and placed in a bark coffin on a scaffold raised several metres above ground. In a spectacular ten-day obsequy, held approximately once every decade and known to Europeans as the 'Feast of the Dead' (Thwaites 1896–1901: X: 279–307), the bones contained in the scaffold interments were stripped of any remaining flesh, washed and wrapped in beaver pelts, removed from the cemeteries of various villages, and carried to a communal ossuary where they were mingled together and supplied with mortuary goods.[5]

At the death of the body, the Huron soul-schema underwent a reconfiguration, with a concomitant shift in terminology. The souls of the afterlife were represented by the verb root *-sken-*, which Steckley renders: 'to be a manifestation of a person who has died' (1978: 101). While it may be tempting to envision this single rubric for the souls of the dead as a conceptual departure from the soul pluralism of life, Brébeuf made it quite clear that the Huron thought the deceased had two *sken*, 'both of them being divisible and material, and yet both reasonable' (Thwaites 1896–1901: X: 287). For purposes of discussion it is useful to provide these with the convenient appellations body-*sken* and free-*sken*, although one must bear in mind that these cannot be directly correlated with the body and free-soul configuration of the living.[6]

As the remains were carried to the primary cemetery, the body-*sken* stayed with the corpse, while the free-*sken* walked ahead. The latter lingered around the graveyard or wandered through the settlement scavenging edible left-overs. Under normal circumstances the free-*sken* did not leave the vicinity of the settlement until the Feast of the Dead, when, after collecting the souls of the goods given them on that occasion, they were properly placated and would depart for the land of the dead ('village of souls') located at the western edge of the world. On the way to this realm these travelling souls were detained at the abode of *Oscotarach*, or 'Pierce-head,' who removed their brains and stored them in pumpkins. Once they arrived at their destination, the free-*sken*

followed a lifestyle similar to what they had enjoyed during their embodied existence among the living, although apparently there were many more complaints.

Depending on the timing of the Feast of the Dead, the interval between the death of an individual and the entry of his free-*sken* into the village of souls could be as much as ten years. During this period the free-*sken* were, what Victor Turner (1977: 95) would describe as, *liminal personae* or 'threshhold people.' These free-*sken* were betwixt and between acceptable social worlds and, as such, were permeated with ambiguity and latent malevolence. For this reason, the living were, for example, disinclined to finish an evening repast the following morning, lest the free-*sken* had sampled the kettle in the interim. It seems likely that these apprehensions were partially assuaged after the Feast of the Dead, when the number of souls lingering around the settlement was greatly reduced.

The geography of the realm of the dead, as well as the obstacles one encountered in reaching it, were related by living individuals whose souls had visited these places during dreams, visions, or other altered states of consciousness. While these souls had the option of reappearing in the realm of the living (presumably at the point when the earthly bodies with which they were usually associated returned to an animated waking state), the free-*sken* could not return from the land of the dead, perhaps because, in the course of having their brains removed, they had lost all memory of the paths leading to their previous home. Reports scattered throughout the Jesuit *Relations*[7] suggest that some living souls also travelled to the Christian 'heaven' – an experience that led to both corroborative and contradictory assessments of the advantages to be gained in the French, as opposed to the Huron realm. The lack of success in converting the Huron to Catholicism suggests that the perceived benefits offered by the Jesuits were often insufficient to overcome the longing to live with one's kin in the village of souls. Occasionally, mourning relatives manifested a desire to retrieve the free-*sken* of a loved one from its abode in the west, although this was accompanied with considerable ambivalence since it involved recourse to an unstable and dangerous liminality and countered the tendency to maintain a barrier between the living and the dead.[8]

The remains of those who had died through violent means such as warfare, murder, or suicide, were immediately buried or thrown into the fire. Victims of drowning or freezing had their flesh stripped and burned, while their bones were thrown into a grave. Since the bones of individuals who had met violent deaths were not included in the

secondary interment at the Feast of the Dead, their free-*sken* did not travel to the regular 'village of souls,' where, complaints notwithstanding, they would have experienced a stable postliminal period with their compatriots. Instead, feared by both the living and the dead, these free-*sken* formed their own communities in the afterlife.

Also excluded from the regular village were the free-*sken* of those feeble and elderly individuals who lacked the robustness necessary for the arduous journey to the west. These set up their own invisible settlements in the geographical realm of the living and planted corn in abandoned fields. Their presence, while occasionally noticed, was not perceived as a threat, and efforts were made to supply them with provisions. Since the remains of infants were buried near or under a path rather than at the local cemetery, they too were destined to forego the Feast of the Dead and the companionship of their relatives in the regular village of souls; besides, their extreme fragility precluded travelling the great distances required to reach it.

Return of the Souls

There is no direct indication that either the exceptional or the normal free-*sken*, during their extended periods of liminality, or after residence in various spiritual abodes, could be re-embodied and join the living as different personae or beings. A free-*sken* did sometimes transform itself into a bird, but this may merely have been a method of transport to the village of souls, in much the same way that a shaman dons ornithomorphic accoutrements to facilitate ecstatic flight (von Gernet and Timmins 1987: 38–9). There is, however, some evidence to suggest that the other half of the soul-duality that characterized the Huron afterlife (namely, the body-*sken*) may occasionally have become incorporated into a human existing in the realm of the living.

A Huron chief told Brébeuf that, while the free-*sken* normally abandons the corpse to travel to the village of souls after the Feast of the Dead, the body-*sken*: 'remains in the ditch of the dead after the feast, and never leaves it, unless someone bears it again as a child. He pointed out to me, as a proof of this metempsychosis, the perfect resemblance some have to persons deceased. A fine Philosophy, indeed' (Thwaites 1896–1901: X: 287).[9] Three years later, this observation was corroborated by François du Peron, who noted that the Huron 'believe that souls enter other bodies after death' (Thwaites 1896–1901: XV: 183), although he failed to specify what souls were involved.

It is unclear whether the body-*sken* was believed to reside in the ossuary forever or was routinely reborn in a new individual. It may be surmised that the body-*sken* had the potential to reappear among the living, and that this latency was only realized as part of a *post factum* explanation to account for the occasional morphological similarities between the living and the dead. The fact that such resemblances were cited as evidence for transmigration is contrary to Druke's (1980) assertion that in Iroquoian ethnopersonality the concept of personhood was never associated with bodily form. Certain aspects of the physical body did in some sense contribute to an individual's identity, and they could reappear as part of the configuration of another identity. The types of attributes interpreted by the Huron as signs of transmigration may never be known, but they may have included birthmarks (see chapters 10 and 13 below).

Although the free-*sken* and the body-*sken* shared the faculty of reason, they were differentiated by an important capacity. The free-*sken* had the ability to wander about, scavenge food, and haunt the living during the liminal period before the Feast of the Dead. The body-*sken*, however, did not enjoy these liberties, but was largely dependent on some form of corporeality – whether this be the bones of the deceased or (after its transmigration) the body of a new living being. Its life-span as a disembodied essence appears to have been limited to the fleeting period of the transmigration itself. Hence, it could not haunt the living, but could only return as a component of a stable individual.

Another informant acquainted Brébeuf with a second type of metempsychosis: 'There are even special ceremonies for little children who die less than a month or two old; they do not put them like the others into bark tombs set up on posts, but inter them on the road, – in order that, they say, if some woman passes that way, they may secretly enter her womb, and that she may give them life again and bring them forth' (Thwaites 1896–1901: X: 273).[10] It seems apparent that infants were accorded different mortuary status because they were not regarded as entire individuals having the full complement of body and free-souls. There is a strong probability that such infants had not as yet been named. Since names were the property of clan segments, the social identity of the nameless children may have been ambiguous. In many cultures naming is an important rite of incorporation, and the unnamed infant is a liminal persona (Hultkrantz 1953: 324–5; van Gennep 1960: 62–3).

Steckley (1986) has advanced an ingenious proposition that links the

preferred location of Huron infant burials to incest taboos, although there is little ethnohistoric or archaeological evidence to confirm such a hypothesis. What *is* clear is that some aspect of the infant's underdeveloped soul configuration was deemed recyclable and that the Huron attempted to control the fate of this aspect through a strategic placement of the corpse. The desirable feature may have been either the 'seed' of the father (Steckley 1986: 5–6) or the essence of what Druke (1980: 59, 64) calls the 'living principle.' Once again, a precise identification and definition of the recycled attribute may never be possible.

A third method by which some traits of the deceased may have been assimilated as part of the identity of living individuals was through name conferral. When a Huron man died his name and associated duties were assumed by a new holder. The most elaborate manifestation of this idea occurred during the 'resuscitation' of outstanding personages or the investiture of chiefs. If a leader or other influential person died, a council was held during which, among other things, the participants mimed the resurrection of the deceased by first placing their hands on the ground and then raising them up; henceforth, the newly elected chief was known by the name of the deceased (Thwaites 1896–1901: XXIII: 165–9). Such ceremonies appear to have taken place during the liminal period between primary and secondary burial when, as Brébeuf observed, they 'revive their names as often as they can' (Thwaites 1896–1901: X: 275–6).[11]

A century ago James Mooney noted that the extension of the name from a mere label to a distinct part of the individual was ubiquitous in native North America (1891: 343). Hultkrantz has observed, however, that the *nomen* is a 'verbal covering' for various realities, ranging from an adventitious attribute to a permanent, essential soul (1953: 319). In the Huron case, there is no evidence that the name had an independent substantial existence or that it was connected with particular guardian spirits. Rather, it was associated with a set of desirable qualities such as courage, wisdom, or oratorical proficiency. These name-qualities may have been regarded as aspects of the deceased person's body-*sken*, and were probably not considered the whole essence of the persona. As Jérôme Lalemant implied in 1639, what was being 'resuscitated' was not so much a dead person, but the immortal attributes associated with his name (Thwaites 1896–1901: XVII: 161).

In an effort to locate the 'resuscitated' name-qualities within the soul-configuration of the living, Steckley (1978: 108–12) has offered an unconvincing argument that identifies them as free-souls (*oki*) and compares

them with the 'name-soul' concept of the Inuit. In fact, if Huron name-qualities can be reified as 'souls' at all, they bear greater resemblances to various life-souls and ego-souls (*onnhek8i*, *eiachi-*, and *-ndi,onr-*). The temptation to use the Inuit (who often observe a synonymy between name and soul) as a model must be accompanied with an understanding that their notion represents a peculiar historical development not shared by many Amerindians (Hultkrantz 1953: 319, 328).

As was the case with infant burials, the Huron hoped to influence the process of transferring desirable attributes from dead chiefs to living heirs by increasing the odds for a successful outcome. The elder women of a matrilineage carefully considered the suitability of a candidate and presented him for election at council. For this reason the aspirant who was to receive the 'resuscitated' name already possessed most of the abilities traditionally associated with the honoured appellation. Accordingly, the conferral may have been an effort to safeguard the interconnectedness of names and qualities, thereby ensuring continuity in political leadership.[12]

Since Brébeuf and his colleagues were only dimly aware of the socio-political organization of the Huron people, they could not specify whether the transfer of various aspects of the persona was subject to moiety, lineage, or clan restrictions, as is almost certainly the case among some Northwest Coast groups (Matlock 1990a). An intriguing clue is, however, offered by Pierre Milet, who worked at the St Francis Xavier Mission among the Iroquois in 1672–3. Milet's description of what was probably an Oneida belief, alludes to souls separating from bodies after death, temporarily residing in a skyworld, and returning to earth where 'they will be reproduced in their own family by their descendants' (Thwaites 1896–1901: LVII: 119). Although there appear to have been differences in their respective eschatologies, the Oneida and Huron did share the same basic social organization. Hence, it is conceivable that, among both peoples, the transfer of souls and name-qualities reflected preferential marriage rules or other constraints which normally governed the relations between contemporaries and provided continuity with ancestral kin.

Conclusions

A concept as evanescent as 'soul' is prone to conflicting definitions, particularly since it lacks the empirical support that often fortifies consensus. Despite its shortcomings and ambiguities, the Jesuits adopted

the Aristotelian-Thomist meaning, together with its unitary connotations. The ethnocentrism generated by the missionaries' own religion and vocation is counterbalanced by the fact that these men happened to be authorities on eschatology and had a genuine interest in understanding analogous notions in Huron thought. In order to 'save' a Huron soul, it first needed to be defined in Native terms and then redefined to correspond with Christian conceptions.[13] This resulted in a remarkably sophisticated philosophical discourse in the backwoods of Canada, during which Western theologians and Amerindian shamans accused one another of 'having no sense.'

At issue was the divisibility of the human being and the ability of some features to penetrate the boundary between life and death. The Huron 'self' was a complex configuration of discrete units identified by a wide semantic field that could not be simply translated into the European 'soul.' Although the modern reader may feel that an understanding of Huron concepts will always be coloured both by the use of the term *l'âme* in the primary source material, and by the enduring predominance of a unitary concept in Western ideology, the problem may be partially overcome by adding adjectives to 'soul' and regarding these modifiers as emically comprehended, independent subdivisions of the Huron 'self.' While they are cumbersome, hyphenated neologisms such as 'body-*sken*' and 'free-*sken*' allow anthropologists or religious historians to at least approximate how the Huron made 'sense' of the relations between life and death.

The Huron believed they possessed as many as five or more 'souls,' which may be viewed as extensions of the basic soul duality characteristic of most Amerindian cultures. Since the apportionment of the Huron persona into a plurality of souls was an essential characteristic of life, it is not surprising that homologous divisions were believed to eventuate among the deceased, who after all, were merely the 'living' transferred to another realm. Like many other peoples, however, the Huron demonstrated a distinct ambivalence when it came to the fate of the dead. This uncertainty was manifested in a tension between, on the one hand, a desire to keep the dead at a safe distance from the realm of the living and, on the other hand, a yearning to literally reincorporate valued attributes into the personae of living individuals.

In his analysis of the Iroquoian concept of the soul, John Hewitt recognized this tension, but presented it in evolutionary terms. He speculated that transmigration was 'a doctrine which was evidently on the wane when the Iroquois [actually Huron] first came in contact with

European people, being displaced by that of a migration to the land of souls' (Hewitt 1895: 115). The ethnohistoric sources do not support such a sequence, but suggest that the Huron believed both fates were possible and desirable.

The tension between incorporation and separation was partly ameliorated by the belief that the persona of the deceased was split into at least two *sken*. The undesirable aspects could be expunged by immediately burning or otherwise disposing of their physical residence (as was the case with victims of violence), or by sending them off to the remote land of the dead after appeasing them with a grand feast and giving their physical residence a proper burial (as was the case with those who died under 'normal' circumstances). The desirable aspects could be recycled by the strategic placement of the corpse (as was the case with infant burials) or by 'resuscitating' the name-qualities of the deceased (as was the case with the investiture of chiefs). A number of apparently neutral aspects could also reappear (as later evidenced by physical resemblances between the living and the dead).

The three possible means by which aspects of the deceased could reenter the realm of the living may not only be distinguished by the status of the deceased or by the type of attribute being reincorporated, but also by the amount of control the living had in the outcome of each case. In the general populace, the transmigration of the body-*sken* was only identified after an uncanny resemblance between the living and the dead had been recognized. Such an event appears to have occurred randomly, although efforts may have been made to ensure the maintenance of the lineage system by restricting the positive identification of transmigration to members of the same family. In the second case, the return of the 'seed' or 'living principle' of the infant was only partially aided by burial custom. In the third instance, the transfer of the name-qualities of prominent chiefs was ritually induced to ensure maximum control. Such variability probably reflects the relative importance the Huron attached to various aspects of the 'self.' While there were no elaborate rites designed to guarantee that the living looked like the dead, there was ample ceremonial activity to safeguard the inheritance of qualities associated with leadership.

There remains the question of whether these Huron examples may collectively be described as a belief in 'reincarnation.' In contemporary parlance, influenced by Hindu-Buddhist beliefs, this word most often refers to the rebirth of *the* soul in another body. As such, the definition nudges one into a unitary conception of soul, in which a single essence

(the totality of the deceased person's surviving, disembodied attributes) is reborn in another corporeal residence. The application of the term 'reincarnation' to Huron belief must, therefore, be accompanied by important caveats which point to the soul pluralism of animistic eschatology, the possibility of separate destinies for different souls or qualities belonging to the same 'self,' the variability in the fate of personae belonging to different social statuses, and the capability of the living to affect the whole process.

With judicious circumspection the Huron material may indeed be regarded as one of the earliest documented cases of reincarnation beliefs in North America.[14] As such, it gives temporal depth to the corpus of more recent, ethnographically recorded examples summarized by both Wachtmeister (1957) and the contributors to the present volume. Some elements of the case outlined here are autochthonous and may represent what it was to be distinctively Huron. Other elements are clearly connected to shamanism and are part of the more general culture-historical continuities which define 'Amerindianness.' Yet, the belief in reincarnation or metensomatosis (change of bodies) is found among numerous other peoples around the world, and its distribution does not reflect the diffusion of a particular religious complex. It appears that certain psychophysiological constraints have generated widespread (but not ubiquitous) similarities in human conceptions of the relationship between life and afterlife. An extensive interdisciplinary scrutiny of these constraints is long overdue.

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Notes

1 The quotations are derived from the definitive edition of the Jesuit *Relations* (Thwaites 1896–1901: VI: 181; X: 141, 147).

2 While James Moore (1982: 126) advances the untenable position that the Catholic and Amerindian spiritual worlds and their relationships to the

physical order were already in basic agreement, others (e.g., Richter 1985: 4, 7; Trigger 1976: 75, 469–70) have pointed to the profound differences between them.

3 Hewitt (1895) appears to have derived much of the material for his study from Brébeuf (interspersed with nineteenth-century Iroquois material) but does not cite his sources. Wolf (1919: 42–7) chastises Hewitt for unacceptable interpretations, but replaces them with a few of his own. Hultkrantz (1953: 84–7) follows Hewitt's speculations and offers a new classificatory system. Steckley (1978) builds on Hultkrantz's schema and introduces a more sophisticated linguistic analysis. Kinietz (1940: 126–8), Tooker (1964: 45–6, 128–45), and Trigger (1976: 51–5, 85–90; 1990: 82–3, 120–31) give excellent summaries of the primary sources, although they do not attempt exhaustive analyses.

4 Anthony Wallace's casual assertion (1958: 237) that the seventeenth-century Iroquoian soul concepts were much like those of European theologians of the day is contrary to the conspicuous incongruence between Amerindian and Jesuit eschatology. Like the Jesuits, Wallace often speaks of *the* soul, instead of the plurality recognized by the Huron, and he follows Brébeuf's belief that the Huron were giving names to separate faculties rather than separate entities (Steckley 1978: 46).

5 Although the secondary interment of bones in a communal ossuary was a peculiar feature of seventeenth-century Huron mortuary practice, various attenuated forms of the 'Feast of the Dead' or 'Ghost Dance' have been recorded in the twentieth-century ethnographic literature on the Iroquois (Dunning 1958; Fenton and Kurath 1951; McIlwraith 1958). For a comparison of the Huron and Iroquois cases see Tooker (1964: 134n–135n).

6 Steckley (1978) has attempted to relate the Huron souls of the dead to the souls of the living. The different nomenclature, however, makes this task exceedingly difficult, and a convincing correlation may never be possible. There is, moreover, a probability that different informants had distinct conceptions of the normative belief, and that the different soul-configurations in life and afterlife were the result of what Festinger (1962) calls cognitive dissonance. Although Hewitt (1895: 108) alluded to this problem, it has not been adequately dealt with in the secondary literature. Despite cognitive dissonance in substantive detail, it is likely that all Huron agreed on the divisibility of the soul and its plurality in both life and death.

7 For a compilation and summary of these scattered sources see Tooker (1964: 142–3).

8 The perilous circumstances involved in retrieving a loved one from the

realm of the dead were illustrated in an orpheus-type myth related to Brébeuf. A man, it was said, risked his life travelling to the village of souls to retrieve his sister. After considerable difficulties he managed to capture her and place her in a pumpkin. On the return trip he secured her brains from the man responsible for storing them in another pumpkin reserved for that purpose. The contents of the two pumpkins (together with the half-decayed corpse of the dead sister) were to be reunited in a ceremony in the land of the living, but a curious onlooker raised his eyes during a crucial moment in the ritual and the attempt failed (Thwaites 1896–1901: X: 149–53).

9 As Brébeuf's use of the French term *metempsychose* suggests, the priest had already been exposed to (what he sarcastically called) this 'fine philosophy,' perhaps by reading the discourse of the Catholic Church, where reincarnation beliefs had been anathematized and declared heretical. Moreover, most educated men of the time were familiar with Classical philosophy, including the 'mistaken' beliefs of sixth century B.C. Pythagoreanism. For example, both the Jesuit Paul Le Jeune (Thwaites 1896–1901: XVI: 191) and the Puritan William Strachey (Wright and Freund 1953: 100) compared Amerindian beliefs in metempsychosis or the transmigration of souls with those of Pythagoras. In many cases, Europeans were interested in uncovering any Amerindian beliefs that corresponded to familiar precepts and that could be addressed by an existing repertoire of counter-arguments. Other early observers, like Joseph Lafitau, suggested that the Huron belief in 'palingenesis' (as described by Brébeuf) was an attenuated vestige of an ideology that had diffused from Classical Europe in ancient times (Lafitau 1974–7: II: 238).

10 Brébeuf's account may have inspired the observations of Joseph Jouvency (an eighteenth-century historian of the Society of Jesus) who, in 1710, wrote that some 'savages' in the Canadian missions 'bury the bodies of infants beside paths, in order that their souls, which they think do not depart very far from the body, may slip into the bosoms of women passing by and animate the yet undeveloped fetus' (Thwaites 1896–1901: I: 263). In 1724 Lafitau noted that the Huron 'are accustomed to bury them [the infants] at the roadsides in the belief that their wandering souls can enter again into the breast of some woman as she passes' (Lafitau 1974–7: II: 239). This also was based on Brébeuf's description.

11 See also Sagard's description of a Neutral ceremony (Thwaites 1896–1901: XVII: 242n; Wrong 1939: 209–10). The Huron/Neutral 'resuscitation' of chiefs has affinities to an important Iroquois ritual known as the 'mourning' or 'condolence' council, in which a 'requickening' restores the

instability caused by death, and a new chief is given the name of the deceased (Beauchamp 1907; Fenton 1946; Hale 1895; Hewitt 1916; Hewitt and Fenton 1944; 1945; Michelson 1988). For a discussion of parallels between the Huron and Iroquois cases see Tooker (1964: 45n). It is also useful to compare the Huron ritual with the detailed description of the installation of an Algonquin chief at Tadoussac in 1644 (Thwaites 1896–1901: XXVI: 155–63).

12 The conferral of names was not limited to the Huron people themselves. Even dead pets had their names transferred to new candidates (Trigger 1990: 39), although it is not clear whether this involved an official resuscitation ceremony. Interestingly, the Native names for individual missionaries were also handed down to their respective successors; thus, *Échon* passed from Brébeuf to Pierre Chaumonot (Axtell 1985: 83–4; Thwaites 1896–1901: XVII: 242n).

13 Brébeuf redefined the Huron term for the *sken* that resides in the bones of the deceased (so that it would correspond to the Catholic concepts of the immortal soul and the Holy Ghost), thereby causing much confusion among his potential converts (Jaenen 1976: 53). The redefinition of the Huron 'soul' has continued to the present day. For example, Anthony Wallace's (1958) effort to show that the Huron had an emic comprehension of psychoanalysis centuries before Freud is based on the reduction of Huron soul-theory to a unitary concept which is translated as 'mind.' Wallace fails to critically analyse the primary sources, and seems unaware that the French language and missionary eschatology influenced Jesuit discussions of Huron souls, visions, and dreams. The identification of the Huron 'soul' with the western 'mind' leaves the perplexing impression that Iroquoians had greater affinities with late nineteenth-century Viennese than with Amerindians of eastern North America.

14 Brébeuf's account was written in 1636 and published in 1637. There is at least one earlier recorded statement which remained unpublished until the nineteenth century. In 1612 William Strachey wrote that the Virginia Algonquians believed their body 'shall dissolve and die, and come into a woman's womb again, and so be a new borne unto the world not unlike the heathen Pythagoras his opinion and fable of Metempsychosis' (Wright and Freund 1953: 100). Strachey was, however, a notorious plagiarizer who copied much of his material on the religion of the Virginia Algonquians from the work of John Smith. While it remains unknown whether this specific elaboration to Smith's text was based on conjecture or observation, it seems possible that it represents an independent confirmation of reincarnation beliefs in seventeenth-century eastern North America.

PAUL RADIN

4 The Reincarnations of Thunder Cloud, a Winnebago Indian

Editor's Note: The following account of the two former reincarnations of Thunder Cloud is excerpted from Paul Radin's *Crashing Thunder: The Autobiography of an American Indian* (Radin 1983). Arnold Krupat (1983: 205–12) notes in the Appendix to the 1983 University of Nebraska Press edition of the book (originally published in 1926) that Radin had published different versions of the same material from 1913 to 1945 framed in slightly but significantly different ways. For example, Krupat (ibid p. 212) points out that Sam Blowsnake's statement, 'This is the work that was assigned to me,' (Radin 1920: 67) became, 'This is the work predestined for me to do' (Radin 1983: 203). As Krupat notes, the translations of the texts, originally transcribed in Winnebago, vary at times in similar ways. Parts once ascribed to Jasper Blowsnake, Sam's father, are elsewhere attributed to Sam (Crashing Thunder), or descriptions of fasting said to be recounted by Thunder Cloud appear in almost the same words attributed to his brother-in-law Crashing Thunder.

Although the text may derive from several sources, it is valuable in its presentation of the manner in which Thunder Cloud recounted receiving shamanic powers through the blessings experienced in the spirit world between his second and his third remembered lives (he said he was living his third life at the time Radin knew him). In the account below, Thunder Cloud appeals to the spirit powers Fire, Buffalo, Grizzly Bear, Chief of the Eels, Turtle, Rattlesnake, Night Spirits, Disease-Giver, Sun, and Grandmother Earth, all of whom, he states, 'blessed me before I was reborn.' He repeated the curing rite he was taught in the spirit realm when called upon to cure his brother-in-law, Crashing Thunder.

The missionary Brainerd (Edwards and Sereno 1822: 348–50) recorded

in 1746 a case among the Lenape or Delaware Indians with features similar to that of Thunder Cloud. He recounts:

What further contributes to their aversion to Christianity is, the influence which their *powaws* (conjurers or diviners) have upon them ... I have laboured to gain some acquaintance with this affair of their conjuration, and have for that end consulted and queried with the man mentioned in my Diary, May 9, who, since his conversion to Christianity, has endeavoured to give me the best intelligence he could of this matter ... The manner in which he says he obtained this spirit of divination is this; – he was admitted into the presence of a *great man*, who informed him, that he loved, pitied, and desired to do him good. It was not in this world that he saw the great man, but in a world *above* at a vast distance from this. The great man, he says, was clothed with the day; yea, with the brightest day he ever saw; a day of many years, yea, of everlasting continuance! this whole world, he says, was drawn upon him, so that *in* him, the earth, and all things in it, might be seen. I asked him if rocks, mountains, and seas were drawn upon, or appeared in him? He replied, that every thing that was beautiful and lovely in the earth was upon him, and might be seen by looking upon him, as well as if one was on earth to take a view of them there. By the side of the great man, he says, stood his *shadow* or spirit; for he used (*chichung*), the word they commonly use to express that part of man which survives the body, which word properly signifies a *shadow*. This shadow, he says, was as lovely as the man himself, and filled *all places*, and was most agreeable as well as wonderful to him. – Here he says, he tarried some time, and was unspeakably entertained and delighted with a view of the great man, of his shadow or spirit, and of all things *in him*. What is most of all astonishing, he imagines all this to have passed before he was born. He never had been, he says, in this world at that time. What confirms him in the belief of this, is, that the great man told him, that he must come down to earth, be born of *such* a woman, meet with *such* and *such* things, and in particular, that he should once in his life be guilty of *murder*. At this he was displeased, and told the great man, he would never murder. But the great man replied, 'I have said it, and it shall be so.' Which has accordingly happened. At this time, he says, the great man asked him what he would choose in life. He replied, First to be a *hunter*, and afterwards to be a *powaw* or *diviner*. Whereupon the great man told him, he should have what he desired, and that his *shadow* should go along with him down to earth, and be with him forever. There was, he says, all this time no words spoken between them. The conference was not carried on by any *human* language, but they had a kind of mental intelligence of each others

thoughts, dispositions, and proposals. After this, he says, he saw the great man no more; but supposes he now came down to earth to be born, but the spirit or shadow of the great man still attended him, and ever after continued to appear to him in dreams and other ways, until he felt the power of God's word upon his heart; since he has entirely left him.

The spirit he says, used sometimes to direct him in dreams to go to such a place and hunt, assuring him he should there meet with success, which accordingly proved so. When he had been there some time, the spirit would order him to another place. So that he had success in hunting, according to the great man's promise made to him at the time of his chusing [*sic*] this employment.

There were some times when this spirit came upon him in a *special* manner, and he was full of what he saw in the great man. Then, he says, he was *all light*, and not only *light* himself, but it was light all *around him*, so that he could see though men, and knew the thoughts of their hearts. These *depths of Satan* I leave to others to fathom or to dive into as they please, and do not pretend, for my part, to know what ideas to affix to such terms, and cannot well guess what conceptions of things these creatures have at these times when they call themselves *all light.*

The passage above and Radin's account of Thunder Cloud, recorded almost 200 years later, are in many ways reminiscent of the description given by the Sioux medicine man Black Elk of the great vision which he was given in the spirit realm when he was seriously ill as a child (Neihardt 1932). The major difference is that Thunder Cloud and Brainerd's informant said they remembered what they were taught in the spirit realm before they were born or reborn, whereas Black Elk is recounting a visionary experience he had during a near-death experience during one life. Lowie (1909: 227) presents a Northern Shoshone account in which it is difficult to discern if Enga-gwacu Jim is recounting trips to a spirit world between lives or trips made to such a realm in a near-death type of experience.

The concept that shamanic powers may relate to a succession of lives is a theme that recurs in numerous other Amerindian and Inuit cultures (cf. Saladin d'Anglure, chapter 6 this volume). The powers of the shamans are said to result not only from their experiences in the current life, but also from endowments acquired during previous lives or between successive lives. The relationship between the dream, vision, and spirit realm encountered within one life and experiences of the spirit realm encountered between lives, and over a succession of lives, is an area that

continues to call for careful textual and linguistic analysis. This is true in part because Amerindian and Inuit concepts are quite different from those which prevail in Western eschatology.

The case of Thunder Cloud exemplifies another recurrent theme: that those who die in battle are especially privileged or likely to be reborn with their memory of the previous life intact. [A.M.]

ABSTRACT. The Winnebago Indian Crashing Thunder wrote in a Winnebago syllabary the account of his life, which includes the story of the reincarnation of his brother-in-law Thunder Cloud. As translated and annotated by Radin, the account tells how Thunder Cloud was killed as a youth, went to live with an old couple 'where the sun sets' until he chose to come to earth again, took revenge, grew old, died, and was reborn again. Thunder Cloud doctored his brother-in-law using rites he had learned through fasting and in states very like his depiction of the state between lives, tying shamanic abilities to reincarnation concepts. Radin and Crashing Thunder convey the respect and awe felt towards Thunder Cloud and his abilities, which included being a poisoner, and how this fact convinced them to let Thunder Cloud marry another of their sisters after the first one died.

Prefatory Note

In the year 1909 I commenced field investigations among the Winnebago Indians living on the Nebraska side of the Missouri River, about twenty-five miles south of Sioux City, Iowa. These Indians had the reputation of being fairly conservative. Perhaps the fact that a Presbyterian mission had in seventeen years succeeded in converting only one family, and a family which then unkindly died without leaving issue, may bear this out.

Among these Indians there lived a family named Blow Snake, consisting of a father and a fair number of children all grown up. Two of these were men quite well known in the tribe for a variety of reasons. These two became my principal informants. They had lived the most exciting of lives, for to the usual round of adventures that fall to the lot of most Indians of that region now, they had added a murder and conversion, the murder first and the conversion afterwards. The older of the two seemed to be by far the more gifted. His memory was simply prodigious. He recounted to me a ceremony which took him two months, working practically six hours a day, to tell me. But what is more to the

point here is that he wove my presence among the Winnebago just then into the whole fabric of his life. I was the preordained one who had sensed what was the proper time to come to the Winnebago, and this legend he diligently disseminated among all his relatives and subsequently embodied in certain autobiographical snatches I obtained from him. It was from him that I obtained a short sketch of reminiscences which, short as they were, threw more light on the real Indian than any of the more elaborate things I had collected in the usual external fashion which is the pride of scientific procedure among ethnologists.

It was from the perusal of these 'reminiscences' that the idea developed within me of getting a real autobiography, and, having heard vaguely of the adventures and tribulations of Crashing Thunder, the younger brother of the family, which seemed to bear all the earmarks of a true rake's progress, I approached him about the matter, to receive a meaningless affirmative reply. For three years he eluded me on one pretext or another until temporary poverty induced him to consent to write down in a syllabary now in use among the Winnebago the fascinating tale of his life. I remember very well how worried he was after he had finally consented. After writing the first part he came to me at midnight, in a very nervous condition, saying that he did not care to proceed because what he had to say would not look nice if White people subsequently read it. When his fears were appeased he continued, and within forty-eight hours the whole manuscript was done.

It is this manuscript translated literally that is here presented. No changes of any kind have been introduced. Certain things, however, that Crashing Thunder had told me on previous occasions, which, for that reason, he merely mentions in the autobiography proper, I have inserted in their proper places. Everything in this manuscript comes directly from him and was told in the original and in the first person. It is needless for me to insist that I in no way influenced him either directly or indirectly in any way.

Some years ago the autobiography proper was published with annotations as an ethnological document in the University of California Series in American Archaeology and Ethnology under the title 'The Autobiography of a Winnebago Indian' (vol. 16, no. 7). I gratefully acknowledge the generosity of the authorities of the University Press in permitting this reissue for a wider audience, in part retranslated and considerably enlarged by the additions mentioned above.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The Teachings of My Father

My father used to keep up the old habit of teaching us the customs of the Winnebago. He would wake us up early in the morning and, seated around the fireplace, speak to us. The girls would be taught separately. Now this is what my father told me:

My son, when you grow up, see to it that you are of some benefit to your fellowmen. There is only one way in which you can aid them and that is by fasting. When on some other occasion, ... you are called upon to recount your war exploits on behalf of the departed souls, be careful, however, not to claim more than you actually accomplished. If you do, you will cause the soul of the man on whose behalf you are telling it, to stumble in his journey to spirit land. If you tell a falsehood then and exaggerate, you will die before your time, for the spirits, the war-controllers, will hear you. It is indeed a sacred duty to tell the truth on such an occasion. Tell less than you did. The old men say it is wiser.

My son, it is good to die on the warpath. If you die on the warpath, you will not lose consciousness at death. You will be able to do what you please with your soul, and it will always remain in a happy condition. If afterwards you wish to become reincarnated as a human being, you may do so, or you may take the form of those-who-walk-upon-the-light, the birds, or the form of any animal you please, in short. All these benefits will you obtain if you die on the warpath.

My Brother-in-Law Thunder Cloud

My brother-in-law was named Thunder Cloud. It is said that he was living his third life as a human being.[1]

This is his account:

I once lived with a small group of Indians numbering about twenty camps. When I had grown up to be a lad, although still not large enough to handle a gun, a war-party attacked us and killed us all. I did not know, however, that I had been killed. I thought that I was running about as usual until I saw a heap of bodies on the ground and mine among them. No one was there to bury us, so there we lay and rotted.

My ghost was taken to the place where the sun sets. There I lived with an old couple. The land of the spirits is an excellent place, and the

people have the best of times. If you desire to go anywhere all that you have to do is to wish yourself there and you reach it. While there I thought I would like to come to the earth again so the old man with whom I was staying said to me, 'My son, did you not speak about wanting to go to the earth again?' I had as a matter of fact only thought of it yet he knew what I wanted. Then he said to me, 'You can go but you must ask our chief first.' Then I went and told the chief of the village of my desire, and he said to me, 'You may go and obtain your revenge upon the people who killed your relatives.'

Then I was brought down to earth. I did not enter a woman's womb but I was taken into a room. There I remained conscious at all times. One day I heard the noise of little children, so I thought I would go outside. Then it seemed to me that I was going through a door but I was really being born again from a woman's womb. As I walked out I was struck by a sudden gust of cold air, and I began to cry.

At the place where I was brought up I was taught to fast a great deal. Afterwards I did nothing but go to war, and I certainly took my revenge for my own death and that of my relatives, thus justifying the purpose for which I had come to this earth again.

There I lived until I died of old age. All at once my bones became unjointed, my ribs fell, in and I died a second time. I felt no more pain at death than that I had felt the first time.

This time I was buried in the manner used then. I was wrapped in a blanket and laid in the grave. Sticks were placed in the grave first. There I rotted. I watched the people as they buried me.

As I was lying there someone said to me, 'Come, let us go away.' So then we went towards the land of the setting sun. There we came to a village where we met all the dead. I was told that I would have to stop there for four nights, but, in reality, I stayed there four years. The people enjoy themselves here. They have all sorts of dances of a lively kind. From that place we went up to where Earthmaker lives, and I saw him and talked to him, face to face, even as I am talking to you now. I saw the spirits too and, indeed, I was like one of them.

Thence I came to this earth for the third time and here I am. I am going through the same that I knew before.

Thus my brother-in-law had lived long ago, had joined the Medicine Dance[2] and adhered strictly to its precepts. He was a good man; he disliked no one; he never stole and never did he fight. He made offerings of tobacco to the spirits and was always giving feasts. He could always be relied upon.

When Thunder Cloud was in spirit land, just before he was to come to this earth, he fasted. He only ate once a month. All the different spirits who live on high, all those who live under the earth, indeed all those whom Earthmaker had created, they all blessed him. Then he came to the earth and was born here as a human being again. When he came to the earth he fasted. All the various spirits who had blessed him before, now blessed him again. Thus did he become a holy man. When he came here, he became a shaman for he was very holy. Indeed he was the North Spirit.

Once when I was sick he treated me. As soon as he came my father arose with tobacco in his hands and made him an offering, greeting him as follows:

'My son-in-law, tobacco do I offer you, and I make offerings to your spirits. You have made your hat[3] become holy, for the various spirits made it sacred. I greet you.'

Before treating me Thunder Cloud told of his fasting experience:

At the very beginning those above taught me the following. All the various spirits who live up above in the clouds, in a doctor's village, came after me and instructed me in what I was to do. They taught me and told me the following. 'Here let us try it,' they said to me. There in the middle of the lodge lay a rotten log, almost entirely covered with weeds. They tried to make me treat this log. I breathed upon it and all those who were in this spirit lodge also breathed upon it. Then for the second time I breathed upon it and they with me. Then for the third and the fourth time I did it. After the fourth time the rotten log arose and walked away. Then the spirits said to me, 'Human being, very holy indeed are you.'

There from the middle of the ocean, from the shaman's village, they came after me. They blessed me, all the spirits in the middle of the ocean. They made me try my power. As many waves as exist, all of them as large as the ocean, upon these they asked me to blow; and as I blew upon them everything became as quiet as the water in a small saucer. So they became. Then I blew for the third time, and it was the same. The fourth time the spirits made the ocean very choppy and the waves were piled, one upon the other. Then they told me to blow again, and show my power. I blew, and the ocean, mighty indeed as it was, became very quiet again. 'Now this, human being, is what you will have to do,' they said to me. 'Not anything will there be that you cannot accomplish. Whatever be the illness a person may have, you will be able to cure him."

All the spirits on the earth blessed me. 'If any human being who is suffering

from pain, makes an offering of tobacco to you, then whatever you demand, that we will do for you,' the spirits told me.

Now at Blue Clay Bank (St Paul) there lives one who is a dancing grizzly-bear spirit. Whenever I am in great trouble I was to pour tobacco, as much as I thought necessary, and he would help me. This grizzly bear gave me songs and the power of beholding a holy thing; he gave me his claws, claws that are holy. Then the grizzly bear danced and performed while he danced. He tore his abdomen open and, making himself holy, healed himself again. This he repeated. One grizzly bear shot claws at the other, and the wounded one became badly choked with blood. Then both made themselves holy again and cured themselves. They had a front paw disappear in the earth and after a while pulled out a prairie turnip. Finally they grabbed hold of a small plum tree, breathed upon it and shook it, and many plums began to fall.

This was only the first part of the treatment.

After recounting his fasting experience Thunder Cloud addressed the spirits and said, 'Spirits, here is a person who is sick and who offers tobacco to me. I am on earth to accept it; to try and cure him.' He then turned to me and said, 'You will live, so help yourself as much as you can. Try to make yourself strong. Now as I offer this tobacco to the spirits you must listen and if you know that I am telling the truth, you will be strengthened thereby.'

Then he prayed to the spirits:

The Prayers to the Spirits

Here, O Fire, is the tobacco for you. You promised that if I offered you some, you would grant me whatever request I made. Now I am placing tobacco on your head as you told me to do when I fasted for four days and you blessed me. I am sending you the plea of a human being who is ill. He wishes to live. This tobacco is for you, and I pray that the one who is ill be restored to health within four days.

To you too, O Buffalo, I offer tobacco. A person is ill and is offering tobacco to you and asking you to restore him to health. So add that power which I obtained from you at the time I fasted for six days and you sent your spirits after me. They took me to your lodge which lies in the centre of the earth and which is absolutely white. There you blessed me, you Buffaloes of four different colours. Those blessings that you bestowed upon me then, I am now in need of. The power of breathing with which you blessed me, I am now in need of. Add your power to mine as you promised.

To you, Grizzly Bear, I also offer tobacco. At a place called Pointed Hill there lives a spirit who is in charge of a ceremonial lodge, and to this all the other grizzly bears belong. You all blessed me, and you said that I would be able to kill whomsoever I wished and that I would be able to restore any person to life. Now I have a chance to enable a person to live, and I wish to aid him. So here is some tobacco for you. You took my spirit to your home after I had fasted for ten days and you blessed me there. The powers with which you blessed me there I ask of you now. Here is some tobacco that the people are offering you, grandfathers.

To you, O Chief of the Eels, you who live in the centre of the ocean, I offer tobacco. You blessed me after I had fasted for eight days. With your power of breathing and with your inexhaustible supply of water, you blessed me. You told me that I could use my blessing whenever I tried to cure a patient; you told me that I could use the water of the ocean, and you blessed me with all the things that are in the water. A person has come to me and asked me for life. As I wish him to live I am addressing you. When I spit upon the patient may the power of my saliva be the same as yours. Therefore do I offer you tobacco. Here it is.

To you, O Turtle, you who are in charge of a shaman's lodge, you who blessed me after I had fasted for seven days, you who carried my spirit to your home, to the home of birds of prey, to you I offer tobacco. You blessed me and you told me that should, at any time, human beings suffer from pain, I would be able to drive it out of them. You gave me the name of *He-who-drives-out-pain*. Now I have before me a patient with a bad pain, and I wish to drive it out of him. This the spirit told me I would have the power to do, when they blessed me before I was reborn. Here is tobacco.

To you, O Rattlesnake, you who are perfectly white, you who are in charge of the snake lodge, to you I pray. You blessed me with rattles to wrap around my gourd; you told me after I had fasted for four days that you would help me. You said that I would never fail in anything I attempted. So now when I offer you tobacco and shake my gourd, may my patient live and may life be opened out before him. That is what you promised to me, grandfather.

O Night Spirits, you also, I greet. You blessed me after I had fasted for nine days. You took my spirit to your village lying in the east, and there you gave me your flutes. You told me they were holy. My flute likewise you made holy. For your flutes I now ask you, since you know that I am speaking the truth. A sick person has come to me and has asked me to cure him. I want him to live, and so I am speaking to you. You promised to accept my tobacco at all times. Here it is.

To you, too, O Disease-Giver, I offer tobacco. After I had fasted for two days

you informed me that you were the one who gave disease; that if I desired to heal anyone it would be easy to do so if I were blessed by you. So, Disease-Giver, I am offering tobacco to you and I ask that this sick person who has come to me, be restored to health again.

To you, O Sun, I offer tobacco. Here it is. You blessed me after I had fasted for five days and you told me you would come to my aid whenever I had something difficult to do. Now, someone is here who has pleaded for life. He has brought good offerings of tobacco to me, because he knows that you have blessed me.

To you, grandmother Earth, I also offer tobacco. You blessed me and promised to help me whenever I needed you. You said that I could use all the best herbs that grow upon you, and that I would always be able to effect cures with them. I beseech you for those herbs now, and I ask you to help me to cure this sick man.

Then Thunder Cloud breathed upon me and squirted some water on my chest. 'What I have said is very true and very holy, I believe,' he said. 'Indeed now you will get well.'

Thunder Cloud knew all the good medicines that exist, and he used them in order to heal me and so that I might recover from my illness. I got well. Indeed Thunder Cloud was holy.

Thunder Cloud was also what we called a poisoner. He used to travel at dead of night, it was said. One night at about eleven o'clock he got ready to poison a family by the name of B. We were all listening, sitting in our lodge. Then outside we heard him make some noise. We were afraid of him because we knew he was a poisoner. Indeed he claimed to be in control of our household. My family would do nothing without first consulting him, for we were afraid of him. We believed that he had come from the spirits, that he was a reincarnated man and, if displeased, would poison us. So whatever he asked we did.

He had been married to my eldest sister and after her death wished to marry the second sister. Where he had come from at the dwelling place of Earthmaker,[4] my elder sister was now staying, he said. But now he claimed that the second sister resembled the first. 'She must be the one I left behind when I came from my spirit home,' he thought. So up above, to Earthmaker's village, he went to see whether his first wife was still there. He found her there. 'How is this? I thought I saw you among the human beings and that is why I have come to see if you were still here,' he said. And the woman answering said, 'Why, where was I to go? Here you left me when you went away and here I have remained

EDITH TURNER

5 Behind Inupiaq Reincarnation: Cosmological Cycling

ABSTRACT. Rebirth runs through every aspect of the cosmos of the Inupiat of Northern Alaska, and includes whales, seals, caribou, and humans. All things have souls; their material integument is a 'parka,' that is, they look upon the flesh as clothing. In the case of game animals the parka, the flesh, is the food which human hunters need for their sustenance. This food is then 'recycled' through humans. If the spirit-bearing organ, that is, the head or the bladder, is treated with respect and delivered back to the sea or tundra, the living spirit within it will grow the parka again, in other words, it will reincarnate. Alongside this way of looking at reincarnation, the Inupiat often mention how people's souls are reborn, often from a recently dead twin or other sibling and sometimes from an actual living elder, such as an uncle. The essay argues that the Inupiat awareness of human and animal reincarnation stems from the tribal principle of horizontal connectedness and interaction throughout the cosmos.

Reincarnation and rebirth affect every aspect of the cosmos of the Inupiat of Point Hope, northern Alaska. The concepts do not only concern the lives of humans, but also of whales, seals, and caribou. All things have souls. Their material integument is a 'parka,' that is, the clothing of the soul, which in the case of hunters' food (the flesh of animals) is 'recycled' through humans, while afterwards the animal spirit grows its parka again. As regards humans themselves, Inupiat often mention how people's souls are reborn in a new baby, often from a recently dead twin or other sibling, and sometimes from an actual living elder such as an uncle. In this chapter I argue that Inupiat awareness of reincarnation both gives rise to and stems from the tribal

principle of horizontal connectedness and interaction throughout the cosmos.

In 1971 Ian Stevenson published the numerical results of a brief study on reincarnation concepts among the Inupiat of Alaska. He investigated fifteen cases of reincarnation, and he compared certain features with those of Tlingit cases. These features were familial relationships between the previous and present personalities (lower incidence), birthmark occurrences (similar incidence), dreams during pregnancy about the reincarnated personality to be reborn (similar incidence), and sex differences between the two personalities (higher incidence). Turkish cases were also compared. He also investigated the interest in reincarnation among old and young Inupiat, and reported that the young of 1969 manifested less interest and belief in the phenomenon than the old. During my year's fieldwork (from 1987 to 1988) and shorter periods annually up to the time of writing, the people of Point Hope have shown a general resistance to giving up their traditions. In my estimation the use of the language and maintenance of many other traditions including that of reincarnation are holding their own. Stevenson commented that the presence of reincarnation ideas in an isolated community was not easily explained by diffusion. However, the effects of diffusion have been found in many isolated communities, as has been shown by diffusion studies during the past century. In the case of Point Hope, in the past the Inupiat peoples' skill in shamanism and the occult was well known to their tribal neighbours. The Inupiat were regarded as masters in this respect – and indeed there are many such 'master' societies of shamanism in the world; and this is not merely an illusion because of the kind of xenophobia that one tribe may have for another's strange customs.

How different human societies cope with intimations of reincarnation is itself an interesting study. I suggest that it is possible that such a phenomenon is everywhere linked with a complex spirit system, varying according to local emphasis; and also (on the basis of personal experience of some of these systems) I would hypothesize that this kind of awareness is a pan-human endowment, which has of course been clothed differently in each culture.

The Inuit generally are familiar with many forms of the soul. One of the first references to reincarnation in the far north comes from Rasmussen (1969 [1927]), describing inland eastern Canadian Inuit. He said: 'They are very little concerned about the idea of death; they believe that all men are born again, the soul passing on continually from one form

of life to another. Good men return to earth as men, but evildoers are re-born as beasts, and in this way the earth is replenished, for no life once given can ever be lost or destroyed.

The idea of the transference of the souls of the dead into new bodies is well known among the people of Point Hope. In a sense, the event of the naming of the child is regarded as the material occasion of reincarnation, which is regarded as a healthy and desirable event. The custom is taken for granted, as one father put it. Which possible predecessor might be involved is often discussed by the adults when a child is little and when signs of possible reincarnation are first seen. It is most certain in the case of the early death of a twin, when the spirit of the dead child is felt to live on in the surviving twin. Also it is strongly felt in the circumstances of the early death of any child, in which case the next child born inherits the personality of its predecessor, thus developing a reincarnated soul. Other relatives may be reincarnated in a child. A child of three in one whale-hunter's family was watched for significant sayings, especially at whaling time, because he was regarded as the reincarnation of his wise uncle Patrick who in turn had gained spiritual powers from his ancestors. 'Aapa catch whale,' the child announced one day to everyone's delight, and indeed Aapa, that is, his grandfather, did assist in catching a whale that year. This child, Aaron, was treated with unusual respect, indeed reverence, which did not fade after a new grandchild was born. When I was preparing genealogies, several cases were pointed out in which a child had died and the next one born had received its spirit.

In one case a young man suffering from alcoholism had committed suicide when drunk. Shortly afterwards a baby was born in the family with a birthmark in the same position as the young man's gunshot wound. These events were drawn to my attention without my inquiring about them. It is likely there were a number more, despite the inculcation of an unusually strict form of Christianity in the area (for instance the word 'shaman,' either in English or Inupiat, became altogether taboo).

The category of spirit that reincarnates is one of many categories of spirits. Merkur (1985) and others mention several among the Canadian Inuit, which include a weather spirit and the sun and moon gods. Among the Inupiat at Point Hope various types of spirit were recognized, though it should be noted that making distinct definitions may be too harsh a way to deal with the delicacy and particularity of the people's experience of these entities. Rainey, who did fieldwork in 1940,

described first the *inyusaq*, the life quality which disappeared four or five days after death, and secondly the *ilitkosaq*, the character, personality, individuality, or spirit of a person or animal which could be transferred from one individual to another (Rainey 1947: 271).

A third type was an entity that helped a shaman and could be an animal or human spirit-helper. In the case of the human, it was the tutelary spirit of a deceased shaman, constantly instructing a shaman. The spirit of a shaman could also be angry and offended by the acts of the living. One of these spirits appeared in Point Hope in 1987 because the town planners of the new village had erected houses over the sites of old shaman graves. This one appeared outside one of the houses in the form of a black caribou man, thirty feet high, an apparition that was seen by two people and heard by me and my assistant.

An animal spirit commonly helped the shaman to catch game. Certain present-day Inupiat at Point Hope possess animal spirit helpers but also evince the virtue of good spirit practitioners – that is to say, they are extremely modest about the fact.

The old shamans were familiar with the use of helper spirits. Such spirits would enable the shamans to 'die' for four days and then return to life; the shamans could change their form into that of an animal, sometimes travelling under the ice where they would enter the house of the whales or seals and change into one of them. In their human communities shamans took delight in dancing and performing their wonders, which were called trickery by most ethnographers of the Inuit. Many Inupiat still maintain that the deeds of the old masters were genuine, as evidenced by the following account of animal spirits and their reincarnation given by Ernest Frankson of Point Hope. He was discussing his great-great-grandfather's animal helper, a giant polar bear.

'Polar bears grow to a gigantic size, then develop three more pairs of legs to become the ten-legged polar bears called *kiniq* or *qoqoqiaq*. If you have an animal helper, you see it like you see this,' and Ernest picked up the saltshaker on the table.

'Is there any difference in the way your great-great-grandfather saw the polar bear and the ordinary way of seeing?' I said.

'He rode on it,' said Ernest. 'Like you ride on a horse. It was real. *You* call it magic. It's ordinary.'

'Supposing, say, a White lawyer or construction worker went down on the ice, could he see and touch a polar bear helper?'

'No. The old ones were masters of the ancient science' (Field notes, 1 February 1988).

In March 1989 during another of my visits Ernest commented on the persistent southwind they were experiencing at Point Hope. He said with his accustomed quietness, 'The southwind takes the caribou. When we catch the caribou their souls are taken away into the mountains by the southwind, to be born again.' He eyed me. 'You find that hard to believe, don't you?' 'Me? No.' I had seen a spirit entity come out of a sick African woman, and my reaction to this caribou phenomenon was interest, not disbelief.

I have shown here the context of a very sensitive system of spirit understandings within which the idea of reincarnation takes its place.

The Chipewyan of the Northwest Territories of Canada also have an understanding of the spiritual nature of the caribou, according to Henry Stephen Sharp (in press). The Chipewyan describe how the caribou comes willingly to the hunter; its soul communicates with the hunter's soul. Sharp says, 'Animals sacrifice themselves to Chipewyans not just to maintain Chipewyan physical existence but to hold the people in contact with that other, and older, realm of being from which the circumstances of contemporary Chipewyan life threaten to remove them entirely' (Sharp in press).

This is an example of the type of connection between human beings and animals that is often encountered among hunting peoples.

Stanley Walens in an important book analysing Boas's work on the Kwakiutl's 'universe of related beings' and their *hamatsa* ritual, writes: 'A human kills because it is his responsibility to eat, his responsibility to be the vehicle of rebirth for those beings, human and otherwise, with whom he has a covenant' (Walens 1981: 163). Thus, Walens sets Kwakiutl reincarnation in the context of the relatedness of the universe. Here the animal and human world together *require* rebirth: there is a 'covenant.'

Similar ideas about communication between the animal and human world exist among many hunting peoples, not only in North America (traits seen even as far south as the Yaqui, see Edward Spicer 1980), but among Ainu, Chukchee, and other peoples orginating from Eastern Asia, some of whom were the forebears of the Native Americans or practised similar customs. My point here is that Inuit ideas about reincarnation, like theirs, were part of a wider consciousness of the unity of the cosmos, and in particular the unity and continuous cycling between human and animal of the vital stuff of the universe. Such a world-view was described in Lévy-Bruhl's book in early anthropology, *How Natives Think* (1985 [1910]). He posited a primeval state of human

consciousness under the 'law of mystical participation' – an age of the world in which all peoples perceived a spirit quality in everything about them. Scott Littleton in a new introduction to Lévy-Bruhl's reprinted book (1985) reemphasizes Lévi-Bruhl's thesis as a corrective for Western ethnocentric thinking. Thus, we come to see ideas about reincarnation experiences as they exist in the widest context of human knowledge of spiritual things.

To gain an idea of the notion among early Siberian Inuit whale hunters of Sereniki and Chaplino, peoples from whom the Alaskan Inupiat must have derived, let us look at a description by the Russian Menovschikov:

> Objects and phenomena had a 'soul' and hence could think and act like men ...
>
> Man was bound by family ties to an animal or lifeless thing ... Their religious attitude is clearly reflected in their folk-poetry: the tale 'The whale born from a woman,' the myth of the kingfisher, which was transformed into a wolf, etc. ...
>
> Killing a wild animal was not considered to be a murder: the verbs 'to kill' and 'to murder' were only used in connection with man. In the hunting terminology it was enough to say 'he reached him,' 'he brought him down,' 'he got hold of a seal, a walrus, a bear,' etc. According to the ideas of the Eskimos, the game was not killed, it came spontaneously to the man as a guest. This guest, however, had to be brought down with the help of a harpoon or a spear. The killed game was highly praised and persuaded not to be offended but to return again to the hunters. To assure this they offered sacrifices: they cut off small pieces of the animal's nose and threw them back into the sea, if it was a sea animal, or on the tundra, if the animal came from there. While casting the sacrificial morsels into the ocean, the hunter would express his gratitude to the animal, 'You have come to me as a guest; I thank you. I allow you to go back now. Return next time with several others!' (Menovschikov 1968: 439).

Here we are beginning to see the concept of cosmic cycling in action. My own experience which gave hints of the whale's future reincarnation concerned the ritual of *niaquq*, 'the head of the whale.' This occasion involved a whale that was caught and hauled up onto the ice in 1988, and the final treatment of its head.

> It was now midnight, but we could see. The immense bone-arch still reared out

of the skull, itself an enormous three-chambered edifice twelve feet across. Standing in the gloom of twilight I heard Claudia and Irene say, 'Evie must take out the heart. It's Evie. The woman.' They helped her; and now the heart, six feet long, lay on the ice. It was the women who cut up the organs, and I worked alongside packing them into sacks and loading them onto snowmobiles, whose lights now looked dazzling, lighting up the people as they laboured on the dim floor of bloody ice.

Next morning I came back to watch the ritual of the head, the only thing left on the ice. The spirit of the whale was inside the head, alive, able to grow its parka again and return.

The men who had been working on the remaining flesh drew away. Ernie prepared them for the last task, the returning of the head to the sea, the work of *niaquq*. For the last time they tied ropes onto the overhead jawbone and Ernie stationed them along the ice margin beyond the head. They pulled, with a wrenching tug. They came this side, others steadying the head behind. They wrenched on the rope, rocked, attempting to rear the solid skull mass out of the pit in the ice that it had caused by its own heat. They wrenched and at last it was free of the hole, standing on ice nearer the edge. Now it was a matter of going back to the sea rim behind and pulling, then forward to the rim in front and pulling, edging the head crabwise toward – toward that drop-off into deep ocean, the Chukchee Sea. It took half an hour. Steadily they pulled, exchanged sides, pulled, and the head crept toward the edge. At the edge itself they detached the ropes and all got behind the skull and pushed, straining, with all their might, their gloves wringing with blood. Heave! It moved. Heave! It moved. It teetered. Heave. SPLASH.

Instantly drawing into a line they howled, 'Ui-ui-ui! Yuuuuu!' and shook with joy. The spirit, *inua*, was returned. Everywhere there was a sigh of relief, for the ice was clear of the spirit, its red shadow released into the water. Everything was quite all right now. All that was left on the ice were the men and their shares – all was material, ordinary. That great spiritual presence was gone. Without the head the ice looked quite different, a vacant lot. And as the yells died down a single shout arose, 'Come back!' (Field notes, 2 May 1988)

Thus, the head with its inner spirit was painstakingly returned to the sea, to grow its new parka, to reincarnate, 're-flesh' itself, and join the 'cosmic cycle' (Fienup-Riordan 1983: 189–235) that not only ebbs and flows with the seasons but rolls forward in continuous replenishment. The whale as a conscious being grows to be the dominant experience of all; and a peak awareness of its consciousness, its spirit, flashes upon the participant at the moment of its departure.

Ann Fienup-Riordan has this to say about the Nelson Island Yupiit, related to the Inupiat. She discusses the natural world as

> a moral order subject to the same rules of hierarchy, power transference, and the cycling of souls as the human social order, and dependent for continuity on right relation within that order. But when human hunters look through or ... travel through a hole in the ice, they see more than the structural replication of human hierarchy. Sea society and human society are not two static parallel hierarchies, but exist in a dynamic interrelationship. Subsistence production is tied to a fundamental cosmological *reproduction* [my italics] ... The larger system at work ... involves an exegesis on the continual creation and recreation of the conditions of generation (1983: 189).
>
> When humans feast on seals, they are hosting the seals' souls as well, in order that ... [the seals] will continue to allow themselves to become food (p. 205).
>
> Men and seals are continually being taken apart and put back together again in the process of transformation from powerless flesh to spiritual efficacy and being, in an unending cycle of generation and regeneration, both spiritual and physical (pp. 207–8).

We encounter among the Nelson Islanders also the idea that if a child is named for a dead kinsperson, then reincarnation comes into existence. 'Some spiritual essence passes with the name' (p. 149). Fienup-Riordan suggests, 'We can see joining the name of the deceased to the body of the newborn as analogous to fabrication, socialization, or retotalization' (p. 143). She adds that, 'for the purpose of reincarnating the dead, names are used, not terms' (p. 157). As we have seen in many cultures, the actual *name* has an effect far beyond its empirical use. How much then is the living parents' act the cause of reincarnation? It appears that the living parents intuit a possible reincarnation, and the naming is somehow its implementation. Might one suppose a divinatory sense in the parents concerning the identity of the reincarnated soul? Fienup-Riordan reports: 'As one native put it, "Naming is like the tide, it's always a little bit different, but if you watch it you see how it works"' (p. 157). Fienup-Riordan also explains: 'As the dead are believed to live again through their namesake, an essential scarcity of souls is established ... Parents are warned that if they scold their children too much, the grandparents for whom they are named will take offense and the children will die' (p. 210). The matter now appears to be out of the hands of the parents; they have to obey, not command. Thus, the responsibility for reincarnation seems to

be ambiguous. Fienup-Riordan's further comment on the seal celebration is relevant: 'This celebration is a processive replication of the cyclical character of the unending journey of both hunter and hunted through death and rebirth. As the seal's soul is freed by the drink of fresh water and food thrown [in the celebration], the human soul is reincarnated by an identical process in naming a child, and regularly placated by similar *in memoriam* offerings of food and drink' (p. 228). There is a kind of overlapping of the worlds of the seal and the humans, because the humans eat the seal meat; and even to be able to catch the seal they have to be spiritually virtuous. To be virtuous they have to restore the organ of the seal's soul, its bladder, to the sea, enabling the seal's reincarnation. Thus their own cycling of reincarnated souls is conditioned by their relationship to the animal world, by their participation in the process of cosmological cycling, a process well grasped in Walens' 'covenant' with 'the universe of related beings.'

Fienup-Riordan's description of Yup'ik cosmological cycling is interesting with reference to the present-day modified ritual practices of the contemporary Inupiat of Point Hope. The concept of cosmological cycling among the Inupiat is found paradigmatically in the reincarnation of the whale. The whale is the centre of life for the people of Point Hope. It is their moral mentor, initiator of spirituality, food, and source of sociality. They do not 'kill' it, it comes to them, for the good of the cosmos, and they are therefore enabled to catch it. If anything, the affairs of humans, even their reincarnations, are secondary to this. We have seen how the mercy which the Yupiit show towards their children overlaps with the piety towards the seal – humans enabling the animal's reincarnation. As noted by Rasmussen, lack of piety will cause a human soul to be reincarnated as an animal. This whole field of interspecies reincarnation calls for some comparative work with the similar Hindu belief of possible demotion to the animal world in the next life, and it might contribute to an interesting subfield in the study of reincarnation, that is, a study involving persons who remember being animals in a previous life.

The animal-human connection becomes understandable in a world where all objects in creation have souls, whether mountains, rocks, plants, lagoons, or rivers, as do all animals – even fishes. Rasmussen writes: 'The cod is supposed to have an immortal soul which returns to the sea when the body has been eaten' (1969 [1927]) caption facing p. 248). Salmon fishermen among Northwest Coast Indians return the bones of the fish to the sea so that the salmon may reincarnate.

Among the Inupiat the soul of the animal resides in its skull. Hunters generally cut off the heads of animals they have caught and return them to their element, so that they may reincarnate. When depicting the soul of an animal in a carving or mask, what is shown is called its skull, but the shape carved is a human face. Thus, there is a notion that all animal souls are basically human. This is seen in shamanic journeys under the sea to the house of seals where the seals talk and possess human form. They keep their 'parkas' hung up by the door, so that when leaving the seal house they are able to don their fleshly seal body and enter the sea again (Ernest Frankson, personal communication). Conversely shamans used to be able to turn themselves into animals – into bears as well as whales and seals. Dorcus Rock relates how an old woman wandered out into the snow. When people followed her tracks to find her, they saw that the tracks turned into those of a bear. Thus, we see animal metempsychosis in action alongside ideas of the return of the soul of the dead into the body of a child. Ideas about such animal exchanges exist alongside the awareness of an old soul in a new child in a general consciousness of cosmological cycling and connectedness.

What I have termed 'connectedness' is the leading principle of life at Point Hope, and it is at the root of the idea of cosmological cycling. In turn, the idea of souls and their reincarnation both feeds the idea of the cosmological cycle and arises from it. We may term 'connectedness' a root paradigm. Victor Turner described how a community 'may be guided by paradigms which may derive from beyond the mainstream of sociocultural process with its ensocializing devices ... Root paradigms are the cultural transliterations of genetic codes – they represent that in the human individual as a cultural entity which the DNA and RNA codes represent in her or him as a biological entity ... I would suspect a connection between root paradigms and the experience of "communitas," an "essential we" relationship (to quote Buber) which is at the same time a generic human bond underlying or transcending all particular definitions and normative orderings of social ties' (Turner 1974: 67–8). How do we see the root paradigm of connectedness in Inupiat culture? First, the people's lives are linked to the environment itself which supplies the hunters with the richest sea water in the world, and thus a wealth of animals – connecting them indisseverably with subsistence hunting and teaching them a deep relationship with the cosmos, and through this the sense of the reincarnation of the animal's spirit. These relationships are spoken of in reverent terms by the hunters. Connectedness is shown in the meat sharing, especially the meat of the

whale. Much reference is made by the people of Point Hope to 'Inupiaq sharing.' Connectedness is shown in the strong influence of the elders, much argued but still accepted (connectedness with the past). Then traditional healing, concerned with bodies, is a universal medium of connectedness, for we all have the body. In hands-on Inupiaq healing, the trouble is taken out by the connection of the hands of the healer with the sick tissues of the patient; bodies connect, they 'converse' in a way hard to describe, for the healing involves spirituality. The moment of healing is the mutual moment of awareness, a moment of concrete 'sym-pathy,' 'feeling with.' The craft is termed 'working on the body.'

Connectedness gathers interwoven strength from all its sources, from the language and its long inwardly-connected Inupiat words on which the Inupiat people pride themselves, being artists in joke expression; and from the dance/drum/song rite with its strongly unison form, a performance very close to shamanism for it somehow 'connects' with the animals and brings them to the hunters, as the hunters often pointed out to me. 'The animals *know* if you're a good person.' Connectedness also grows from the clan system which is marked by ludic competitiveness. Here connectedness is achieved by the amusing inter-clan games at the time of the solstices. These games override political competitiveness, and at the winter solstice they end in a proudly performed potlatch-like show of gifts, each clan for the opposite clan. It arises in the kinship network which includes not only one's own family, siblings, and cousins, but 'my bosom friend,' *umma*, whom one may kiss. This person is the spouse of one's namesake, *atiq* – also, like *umma*, a pseudokinship term. These two latter terms are connected with the special character of naming mentioned above, which has overtones of reincarnation. The network of relations also includes one's in-laws, one's adoptive siblings, and one's divorced parents' children – comprising in all a horizontal web or cocoon of great complexity. 'We're all related to each other,' said the Inupiaq leader, Jack Schaeffer, in the beginning of a speech to the elders. These are all conscious items, frequently referred to.

Connectedness is literally the process itself of skin sewing, without which Inuit life generally could not have existed – the process of connecting shaped pieces of skin by needle and thread into a parka which is to the unprotected human being – so conscious and full of soul – as the seal or whale's parka is to *its* conscious soul. Clothing is not the secondary matter that it is here, nor is woman's work generally. Connectedness is even seen in the widespread use of CB radio, whereby all

religious culture item within the general culture. Thus, from the complex web of knowable facts and knowable events in Point Hope we see rising the more delicate consciousness of souls and of the spirits in animals and in all things, and memories of the work of the 'ancient scientists,' that is, shamans, and their collaboration with spirits. A sense of this requires one to follow events in great detail and to experience what the field subjects experience, if at all possible.

The Inupiat are eminently practical. Curiously enough the system reminds me of the utopian view implicit in early Marxist analyses of habitat and society. It could be said – as Marcel Mauss divined at the turn of the century – that what socialism ought to have been looking for all these years was not an erection of locked-in economic laws but something like the underlying philosophy of the Inuit. If Marxism had shared such a world-view, that of cosmological cycling and connectedness, our world would be different today. As it is, the Marxists neglected their part of the planet just as Western civilization in general has done.

The Inupiat generally never tried to change the world as Marx did, but in another sense they went further where purely scientific Marxism never allowed itself to go. They saw the soul in the material environment and in the cycling processes – which is actually the only way to make sense of early Marxism with its philosophy of 'the brotherhood of man,' so-called but never deeply understood. The Inuit feeling for connectedness still represents something we have lost and are not likely to find by going the way of further modernization. Contemporary anthropologists are realizing this early Marxist sense also, seeing the need in their work for an undeviating respect for the material environment (materialism), and with a finger on the pulse of process, movement, and the sense of cycling (the dialectic). Of course environmentalists have been saying the same, that a sensitive perception of universal cycling is necessary for a healthy attitude towards the planet.

After writing a draft of this essay I realized that the Ndembu of Zambia among whom I worked for three years in the 1950s and 1985 recognized reincarnation, but that I had ignored it. This is how it was seen: The Ndembu baby was born, and then it began to cry frequently. The watchful kin tried ancestor names on the child to discover which ancestor had been reborn. If the baby heard the right name it would stop crying, and they knew they had hit on the right spirit (*mukishi*). The name was always that of a dead kinsman on the father's side. The

Ndembu kinship system is matrilineal, and in this way the father's spirit broke into the lineage of matrilineal ancestor spirits. Another and greatly respected method of divination for the baby's name was this. The father of the new baby sat on a stool with the woman's pounding pole in his left hand. The front end of the pole was slanted on the ground before him. He pushed and pushed the end back and forth on the sand at his feet, muttering names under his breath. Suddenly for no reason the pole would stop moving of its own accord. The name the father uttered at that precise moment would be the name for the baby. When given the name, the baby would stop crying, be happy, and begin to thrive.

The Inupiat, Yupiit, and Ndembu cases are cases of keenly sought-for reincarnation. In the Bardo system of the Tibetan Buddhist's way of the dead we encounter an intense concern to inform the fleeing spirit of the dead, by chant and ritual, as to the right road that will lead to heaven and *away* from the lesser path of reincarnation. In this system, much could happen to interrupt the approach to heaven and cause the soul to reincarnate instead of reaching heaven – not a desired outcome in this culture.

So some actually *steer* a soul towards reincarnation, and others steer it away from reincarnation.

Are there universals in reincarnation and what are the variations? There is 'ordinary' reincarnation which recognizes the cycling processes of birth, death, rebirth. Then the same process but one that concerns the special case of violent death, after which the soul returns into a new body in a state of shock, seeing its previous life all the more distinctly because of the unexpected death and not aware of the change (Jean-Guy Goulet, chapter 10 this volume). A slightly different process – still metempsychosis – exists among adults, for example, in the case of a healer invested with a tutelary spirit that came to her or him on the occasion of her vocational conversion, an occurrence found among the Ndembu; or in the case of pious ceremonies of succession to an ancestor's personality, which Harkin terms 'instantiation,' again found among the Ndembu. Then in Hinduism and Buddhism there may be a ranking of objectives in the afterlife in which it is best of all not to be reborn, second best to be born as a holy man, third as a humbler man – a rich man according to the ordinary man in the street – fourth as a woman or animal, and so on. In Christianity, Judaism, and Islam there exist concepts of return as in the visitations to earth of the Virgin, of Esias, or the Twelve Imams of Islam. The movement of the soul takes many forms and behaves in a variety of ways, but the ideas are extraordinarily common.

I have dealt here with Inupiat, Yupiit, and Ndembu ideas about reincarnation. Detailed cases from different cultures are now being found as researchers no longer regard reincarnation ideas as insignificant. They are in no way insignificant. They are sometimes the very matrix and origin points of social structures or of indigenous philosophies of life.

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BERNARD SALADIN D'ANGLURE

6 From Foetus to Shaman: The Construction of an Inuit Third Sex

Editor's Note: The following chapter is a condensation and translation of a much longer article published by Saladin d'Anglure in 1986 as 'Du foetus au chamane: la construction d'un "troisieme sexe" inuit' in *Études/Inuit/Studies*. The editors are grateful for Saladin d'Anglure's permission to translate and condense the original. The article represents the culmination of many years of fieldwork with the Inuit. Shortening the article, we have concentrated on the portions that describe the examples of Inuit concepts of gender and their relation to the naming system and to concepts of reincarnation. We refer the reader to the original source for a full presentation of Saladin d'Anglure's analysis of the topic, which he aptly calls a 'total social fact.'

Jean Briggs, in an article called 'Expecting the Unexpected: Canadian Inuit Training for an Experimental Lifestyle' (1991) has described a situation in which a boy not quite three years old was teased by a group of adults who suggested to him that they cut off his penis. Briggs's careful and perceptive description of the scene takes on an additional meaning in the context of this piece by Saladin d'Anglure, who poignantly describes how malleable many Inuit groups believe gender to be.

The translation was done in about equal parts by David Murray, a graduate student in Anthropology at the University of Virginia, Richard Slobodin, and Antonia Mills. The editors wish to thank Dr Owen Morgan of the French Department at McMaster University for carefully reviewing our translation against the original text, and for his useful stylistic suggestions. [A.M.]

ABSTRACT. Drawing upon the ethnographic tradition from Boas through Ras-

mussen, and augmented by extensive fieldwork with the same Central Arctic peoples, the author depicts Iglulik thought about the malleability of sex/gender, the origin of the sexes/genders, and the relation of transvestism to giving a child the name of one or more cross-gendered deceased relatives, whom the child is thought to reincarnate. Iglulik belief is presented through specific examples of people given multiple names, often of namesakes of the opposite gender. Five cases of shamans are described, showing how cross-gendered names and guardian spirits contribute to their being intermediaries between the land of the living and the dead, between humans and animals, between the genders, and between the sky, the earth, and the sea. A structuralist approach reveals the 'third gender' to be the artefact of culturally required transvestism, which predisposes such a child to become a shaman.

This chapter explores the borders of gender categories through some Inuit social categories and practices. It is intended as an invitation to broaden the anthropological debate on male/female relations. It proposes the use of new conceptual tools, such as a tertiary paradigm of gender categories, illustrated by a gender triangle with a 'third gender,' permitting a redefinition of cultural transsexualism, transvestism, and shamanism.

The approach has produced a model of the various components of the universe as conceptualized by the Inuit, which situates them in a social time-space where the 'third gender,' from foetus to shaman, figures as the axis and mediator between man and woman, between human and animal, between the world of the living and the world of the dead, between the visible and the invisible, the left and right, the sea and the earth, winter and summer ... it is a veritable total social fact.

Ontogenesis, Cosmogenesis, and the Sexual Frontier

The Inuit foetus is considered as a miniature human endowed with consciousness and will, but psychologically fragile, unstable, susceptible, and versatile, characteristics shared with the spirits of the dead and with animals, as well as with supernatural beings, dwarfs and giants, with children, and with shamans. Endowed with hypersensitivity, it hears, understands, smells, and sees (from the moment of birth) that which humans cannot see, smell, hear, or understand, the exception, of course, being the shaman.

From the relatively rare facts on the central Arctic people, it seems

that the Inuit believe that the transformation of gender is possible in two directions, both in the myths and in the actual accounts of deliveries.

Gender Changes at Birth: the Sipiniit

The foetus can change gender at birth when it is annoyed or if the delivery is too long or difficult. An infant who changes its sex is called *Sipiniq*. A ritual exists to attempt to fix the sex of the newborn when one is afraid that it is changing, as described by Mitiarjuk (in Saladin d'Anglure 1977b) for Arctic Quebec: 'The midwife (at the birth of the baby) must touch its pubis in order to know if it is a boy, in order to know if he has a penis, and also in order that (the boy) will not crack open during birthing, because it is said that they can crack open if one does not "feel" them ...'

Davidialuk Alasuaq (recorded by Saladin d'Anglure in 1971 at Povungnituk) added some details on the power of looking in order to fix the sex: 'When the baby was born, if it was a boy, the midwife would touch his penis so that he would not transform into a girl ... one could touch his penis or look at it for a while, especially while cleaning the baby ... One must not look elsewhere so that he would not change his sex while being cleaned ... it would sometimes take only a moment of inattention for him to change sex.'

The same fear is expressed in the Iglulik region and the change of sex is attributed to the same causes. Freuchen (1939: 440) recounts how a newborn boy was transformed into a girl due to an infraction of a taboo by a member of the baby's family.

> The sole event to break the monotony of the days was the birth of a child, brought into this world by the wife of Tapartee ... One day we were in her tent for tea when she told us that perhaps it would be a good idea to leave: she was going to deliver. The baby was a girl, which was all the more interesting since she had boasted ... that she would have a boy ... a little later, (she came) to tell us what had happened. She had, as she had predicted, brought a boy into this world. However, it was necessary to tie the umbilical cord of every child before a word was spoken in the room, and the mother was going to carry out this rite when the sister of the newborn ran into the room without warning, crying out something about her clothes. This violation of etiquette so profoundly troubled the boy that his genitals reentered his body and he became a girl. The mother was furious and the little sister cried in repentance.

It is necessary to place this slightly superficial description by Freuchen in its context. The action took place at the entrance of Repulse Bay where the Fifth Thule Expedition (1921–3) had established its base. The parturient figure (the wife) was Usaarak, daughter of the shamans Aua and Orulo, an Iglulik couple, who were two of Ramussen's principal informants. She had had two daughters from her previous husband, Amarualik, who was murdered two years earlier by an Inuk from a neighbouring group who had wanted her for his wife. The murderer had not succeeded in taking Usaarak, and her family had promptly remarried her to Taparte (see Rasmussen 1931: 16–22). The custom was that after the death of someone, his name must be given to the first child borne by his surviving spouse. Because of the dramatic circumstances surrounding Amarualik's death, it was evident to everyone that he would want to be revived in Usaarak's next child. Hence Usaarak's prediction that she would have a boy. This prediction was supported by objective signs like the large oval shape of her stomach during her pregnancy and her strong desire to have a son, as she already had two daughters.

Freuchen maintains a level of explication based on external causes and signs. At this level, the sex change according to our informants is often accompanied by signs, like the sound of cracking, when the vulvar fissure is formed and the penis retracts, a clitoral hypertrophy, a frontal capillary implantation of the viriloid type with disengagement of the lateral sections of the forehead (known as Tuusiniruttualuk in the Quebec Arctic). In addition, a 'masculine character' with the proclivity to command and to dominate the spouse (*angutauninga malitsugu*, 'she follows her masculinity') ensues. From the physiological point of view the cases of sex transformation are usually accompanied by genital oedema and dysuria, where the urinary tract is blocked by phlegm (see Minie Aanaqatak 1968, recorded by Saladin d'Anglure at Kangiqsuk, and Martha Angugaattiaq 1974, recorded by Rose Dufour, at Iglulik, in Dufour 1975).

According to Angugaattiaq at Igloolik, when the midwife notices the beginning of the baby boy's transformation into a girl, she seizes the penis between two fingers and sucks, which stops the process (Dufour 1975: 67–8). However, if the mother actually desires a girl, she may attempt to modify the course of nature, or rather (if one adopts the Inuit point of view), to frustrate and discourage the foetus, when she thinks it is male, as shown in an example recounted by Niviatsiaq of the same village: 'When I went into labor with L (her son) I wanted the baby to

be a girl. I wanted a longer period of labor so that it would be Sipiniq, but at its birth it was a boy' (recorded and cited by Dufour 1977: 76).

Our own data show that the blind father-in-law of Niviatsiaq had expressed his wish to have his name transmitted to the newborn child at birth so that he could see all the relatives he liked through the eyes of his homonym. It was this wish that overpowered the future mother's desire to have a girl.

Comparable beliefs have been revealed in Ammassalik by Robbe (1981). They revolve around the idea that all foetuses are masculine: 'The foetus has a penis, all foetuses have a penis. The foetus is like a boy. When he starts to move and he is still very little, he grabs his penis and only lets go at his birth, if he wants to remain a boy. If he wants to be a girl, at the moment he begins to move he does not grab his penis. His penis therefore transforms little by little into a vulva and a girl will be born' (Robbe 1981: 74).

What emerges, despite the variations, from these different accounts, is the possibility for the foetus or the newborn to change sex. *Sipiniit* (pl.) may be due to human negligence, the risks of delivery, or to the will of the deceased. That will is made known either by the deceased before his/her death, through shamanic seances or divinations during the actual delivery, or by the intra-uterine memories later recalled by the infant.

Iqallijuq's description of intra-uterine memories constitutes, in this genre, an exceptional example. This scene takes place in the uterus, which is in the shape of the mother's igloo:

As I was looking out the door, I started to think that I would like to pass through it ... However, I did not reach the entrance way. Situated to the left of the entrance were male instruments ... I extended my hand towards them and grabbed them, but the idea that I would be very cold when I used them made me put them back, and grabbing instead the female equipment, a little oil lamp and a little knife (crescent-shaped), I emerged with great effort .... Savviuqtalik, my eponym, had expressed the wish to be reborn as a female ... Indeed, I took my time at birth as I had first grabbed the knife of the male, a harpoon and the tip of a harpoon; this is the reason why I took so long [to be born] ... In fact I had become cross-gendered because Savviuqtalik had not wanted to return as a man, but as a woman. He did not want to hunt because it was too demanding and there was the great risk of being cold. Thus I became a girl after my sex

was changed at birth. First I had a penis, but then I had a vulva; this is the way of the 'cross-gendered' (Sipiniit) (Saladin d'Anglure 1977a).

Sex change could also operate in the opposite direction, that is, from girl to boy, with the same designation. Minie Aanaqatak (1968) of Kangiqsuk, explained to us that the newborn girl-transformed-into-a-boy had a tiny penis and abundant hair implanted like that of girls. Iqallijuq gave the following details about one of her children to Dufour (1975: 67): 'He was a girl before birth but when he was born his penis was very small and his scrotum almost non-existent. So I knew that he was a girl before he was born ...'

The same informant also made the following statement regarding the Sipiniit change from girl to boy: *'Angut illuangani sipijuq'* (this boy is split in the other direction). One can posit that the cases having similar occurrences of cryptorchidism and hypospadias were interpreted in this way.[1]

These intra-uterine memories and even the reminiscences of other lives through the Atiq (soul-name) represent a widespread phenomenon among the Inuit (see Saladin d'Anglure 1977a) and are confirmed for the majority of groups.

Ontogenesis and Cosmogenesis

A number of myths illustrate this capacity for recollection as well as the symbolic gestures that determine the stability or change of the foetus's sex at birth. The most famous is the story of Arnakpaktuq ('he or she who was engendered numerous times') who, in the version told to us at Iglulik by Kupaq, recounted the story of a wife beaten by her husband. The wife first transformed herself into a dog and then incarnated herself as a variety of animals of which the last, a seal, was harpooned by her own brother. At the time of her dismemberment by the wife of her brother, she penetrated the wife's uterus, became a foetus, and after the pregnancy, was born again as the son of her brother.

Upon reaching adolescence, 'he' recounted his memories, and it is because of this that the details of his adventures and gender changes are known. As with Iqallijuq's recount, he had to choose before leaving the uterus, between a feminine implement (a crescent-shaped knife) and a masculine hunting weapon (the tip of a harpoon), a rounded tool for

femininity and a pointed weapon for masculinity. We should keep these characteristics in mind as we will see further on how they are also used by adults to change gender symbolically.

Myths of the Origin of the First Couple

Sipiniit beliefs, so well described by Dufour (1975, 1977) and evoked by Briggs (1974: 297), are almost completely overlooked by traditional ethnography. However, they correspond to a number of myths which reinforce their logic and serve to keep the beliefs alive. The most important of these myths has been all but bypassed since Rasmussen's publication of it in three short versions, each only a few lines in length. The first two are in his monograph on the Iglulik, and the third in the monograph on the Netsilik Inuit:

It is said that once upon a time the world fell to pieces, and every living thing was destroyed. There came mighty downpours of rain from the heavens, and the earth itself was destroyed. Afterwards, two men appeared on earth. They came from two hummocks of earth; they were born so. They were already fully grown men when they emerged from the ground. They lived together as man and wife, and soon one of them was with child. Then the one who had been husband sang a magic song: *'Inuk una, usuk una, pa.tulune, neritulune, pa. pa. pa* ... A human being here, A·penis here, May its opening be wide and roomy. Opening, opening, opening!' When these words were sung, the man's penis split with a loud noise and he became a woman, and gave birth to a child. From these three mankind grew to be many (version of the shaman Unaleq, see Rasmussen 1929: 252).

There was once a world before this, and in it lived people who were not of our tribe. But the pillars of the earth collapsed, and all was destroyed. And the world was emptiness. Then two men grew up from a hummock of earth. They were born and fully grown at once. And they wished to have children. A magic song changed one of them into a woman, and they had children. They were our earliest forefathers, and from them all the lands were peopled (version of Tuglik, wife of the above Unaleq, see Rasmussen 1929: 252–3).[2]

Woman was made by man. It is an old, old story, difficult to understand. They say that the world collapsed, the earth was destroyed, that great showers of rain flooded the land. All animals died, and there were only two men left. They lived together. They married, as there was nobody else, and at last one of them

became with child. They were great shamans, and when the one was going to bear a child they made his penis over again so that he became a woman, and she had a child. They say it is from that shaman that woman came (Rasmussen 1931: 209).

Rasmussen gave only the English translation with the inherent ambiguities of the language: 'Two men appeared on earth'; this raises the question, should it be 'two men' or 'two humans'?[3]

Two other myths speak of transformations between the sexes. One tells how a woman living alone and isolated with her daughter transformed herself into a hunter; she made herself a penis, not by elongating her clitoris, but with the poker from her oil-lamp; she made herself a sled from her large vulvic lips; some yellow dogs from her urine; and some black dogs with her excrement. The third myth is the story of a shaman who lost his genitals in a hunting accident and decided to transform himself into a woman (see Rasmussen 1929; Kupaq 1973). We see in this myth a logic which underlies and reflects the Inuit belief in the instability of sex at birth, which is fed by the frequent genital anomalies in nature and inherent in sexual reproduction (Maranon 1931).

Choice of Name and Gender Identity

Among the Inuit of the central Arctic as among the Inuit of other areas, names relate to a complex system which has never been exhaustively studied. The subject is one of the most difficult to study, because it stems from both the study of the origin and forms of proper names, from the study of social relations, and from the belief system. The study requires a thorough knowledge of the language and very lengthy enquiries. One can understand that the ethnographers were either ignorant of this element of Inuit culture, or they had only studied certain aspects of the complex. Nonetheless, names have been a topic well studied in the Belcher Islands (Guemple 1965), in Hudson Strait (Saladin d'Anglure 1970), at Igloolik (Saladin d'Anglure 1977a; Dufour 1977), on Nelson Island in Alaska (Fienup-Riordan 1983), at Ammassalik in eastern Greenland (Gessain 1967, 1980; Robbe 1981), and at Thule in northwest Greenland (Søby 1986). Frederiksen (1964) has written stimulating commentaries on the concept of name at Hudson Bay and Heinrich (1969) for Alaska. In addition, numerous qualitative data are scattered throughout various ethnographies.

The most interesting account is without doubt that of Rasmussen:

> Everyone on receiving a name receives with it the strength and skill of the deceased namesake, but since all persons bearing the same name have the same source of life, spiritual and physical qualities are also inherited from those who in the far distant past once bore the same name. The shamans say that sometimes, on their spirit flights, they can see, behind each human being, as it were a mighty procession of spirits aiding and guiding, as long as the rules of life are duly observed; but when this is not done, or if a man is tempted to some act unwelcome to the dead, then all the invisible guardians turn against him as enemies, and he is lost beyond hope (Rasmussen 1929: 58–9).

Rasmussen also cites (1931: 222) the discourse of a woman who had just enumerated to him her sixteen names: *'aterminik puurtalik atigin.at.loqame atiminik napasuq:'* her name is as a bag round her, she is the name from beginning to end, and therefore she is held upright by her names.'

The process which leads the name to take a new human form is called *arnagneq* (Rasmussen 1931: 222). This term is made up of the root *arna* (female) and could signify begetting as in the myth of the woman beaten (Arnakpaktuq) who was engendered several times. All names in the Iglulik region pass through this process of 're-engendering' even when they are attributed a long time after birth (with the exception of surnames). The testimony of Iqallijuq concerning her birth, apparent death, and revival, as well as her testimony concerning her eighth child Makkiq, given below, exemplify this process. The first example is from the narrative of Iqallijuq (Saladin d'Anglure 1977a) from the moment her intra-uterine memories stop, that is at her birth: 'I fell in a deep sleep; in effect I was dead. [My mother] cried to my father to come, but he answered that he was doing shamanism to ask me, Savviuqtalik, to live.' Ittuliaq, the father of Iqallijuq, was a shaman, and he tried, with the help of his guardian spirit, 'Iqallijuq,' the creator in the myths of the salmon, to convince Savviuqtalik (reputed to be reborn in the baby) to agree to remain with them. To support his efforts he gave to the newborn infant the name of his own guardian, Iqallijuq, which thus became the official name of the baby, and the one which one could speak. However, this shamanic intervention did not suffice, as Iqallijuq recounts (Saladin d'Anglure 1977a): 'Then I fell again into a profound sleep [I died], the voice of Arnaqtaaq wakened me; I heard her say, "Let me be this one, let me reinforce her life, let her reinforce mine, so that

through her I carry the name of Iqallijuq because I am tired of hearing that of Arnaqtaaq" ... I was then truly alive.'

She was saved by this last and important injection of vitality (*inuulik-saq*) contained in the name of an old woman who was still alive. Their two lives would henceforth be branches of one another (*kiigutiginiarpaa*). Both profited from this, the baby by acquiring a long life and the old woman by obtaining through the intermediary of her little namesake the descendants which she did not have. The child was also given another name, that of the co-wife of her maternal grandmother. Thus, cloaked in four names, the child, cross-gendered from birth (to realize the wish of the grandfather as namesake), would be dressed as a boy until puberty, and socialized as a boy (Saladin d'Anglure 1977a): 'Until I began my menses, I wore boys' clothes and I often accompanied my "little father," my own father having died by drowning ... Thus I always wore masculine clothing and thought of myself more as a man than a woman. When I became an adolescent and when I began menstruating for the first time, my mother began to make me a young woman's coat, and feminine pants, but she began to cry. Because of the name that I had, she thought that I was her father and she refused to make women's clothes for her father. It was only then that I realized I was a woman.'

In 1986, when she was more than eighty years old, Iqallijuq liked to sew and embroider, but it was not always so. In 1922, when Rasmussen spent several days in the igloo of the shamans Aava and Urulu, with whom Iqallijuq lived (being their niece and a close friend of their son Ujaraq), he did not understand why, at the time of the communal meal of raw meat, the young girl refused the woman's knife (*ulu*) which he passed her, and preferred an axe to cut her meat. In fact she had never used a woman's knife and did not feel capable of using one. Rasmussen had failed to observe that, conversely, Ujaraq used a woman's knife to eat, because of his feminine identity (data from Iqallijuq collected by Saladin d'Anglure at Sanirajaq in 1986).

Examples from Iqallijuq's Family

In order to situate the practices and beliefs in their context so as to better understand Inuit identity and the overlap this implies between generations and genders, I will describe in detail the example of Iqallijuq's family. As her elderly namesake predicted, Iqallijuq gave birth to numerous children. First she married Amarualik, a widower, with

whom she had her first son. The infant received four names: that of his deceased maternal grandfather, Ittuliaq, those of two paternal great-uncles, and that of the deceased first wife of his father. But the household of Iqallijuq was soon perturbed by invisible spirits, the Ijirait (Saladin d'Anglure 1983), who wanted to take Amarualik to their territory, far away in the mountains. Amarualik had in effect, during his time of being a widower and without the knowledge of the Inuit, contracted a marriage with an *ijiraq* woman who continued to pester him with her assiduous attentions, and to display jealousy of the young Inuit woman he proceeded to marry (Iqallijuq). Refusing to admit that he was thus possessed, the poor man died in great torment. Iqallijuq's in-laws compelled her to give her first-born son in adoption, arguing that Iqallijuq was very young and had no provider.

Remarried after some time by her own family, Iqallijuq found herself pregnant again, and gave birth to a daughter who was named Arnaannuk after a relative who had recently died. Then she had a son shortly after the death of her elderly mother; therefore he received her name. We saw above (in discussing intra-uterine memories) how the old man Savviuqtalik (the father of Nuvvijaq) wanted to be reborn as a woman so as to remain near his daughter (the namesake of his sister). Nuvvijaq, for her part, had asked before her death to be reborn as a man so that he/she could hunt far away.

Iqallijuq told us that, divided between the happiness of having 'her mother' with her, incarnated in the infant, and the pleasure of having the first son of her own (since she had had to give up her first son from her first marriage) she had, with the agreement of Ukumaaluk, her second husband, given a double education to the child. The young Nuvvijaq (she addressed him as a sister, perpetuating thus the relation of their deceased namesakes) learned therefore both sewing and hunting. He was also dressed, until his marriage, in the coat of a boy and the pants of a girl (Saladin d'Anglure 1980a: 91). In 1986 they still lived close to one another and visited each other daily.

Two years later, another son was born. A related family asked to adopt him. Since Iqallijuq already had children of both sexes and because she was still young, she and her husband agreed to give this baby up for adoption, who from birth had been named Amarualik, the name of her deceased first husband. In fact, according to Inuit custom, it was necessary to give this name to the first issue from her second marriage, but doubtless because of the troubled circumstances of Amarualik's death, this rule had not been followed. However, during

Iqallijuq's last pregnancy the deceased husband had manifested in a dream his desire to be once again among them, and it was necessary to acquiesce to such a request, on penalty of the death of the baby. The adoptive mother of the baby also added on the two names of her mother who had recently died.

Next a daughter was born, her only true daughter, according to Iqallijuq, as the only one of her daughters whom she called by the kin term *panik* ('daughter'). The baby received the name of a paternal aunt who had recently died and that of a distant maternal cousin.

Two stillbirths followed, and then she again had a son, known now under the name of Makkiq. Iqallijuq gave us a lengthy commentary on the importance of acceding to requests concerning the bestowal of a name.

> When someone manifested the desire that his name be carried, after his death, by a new-born, it was necessary to take this very seriously. I remember what Ivalu, my father's uncle, told me when I was pregnant, before Makkiq was born. He said, 'You are the only relative close enough to me who could have a child to take my name. When I die, you will have a son; if you do not give him my name, he will die. If you give him my name, he will live.' After the death of Ivalu I had a son who was given the names Makkiq, Nanuraq and Kalluk. My mother-in-law, Ataguttaaluk, decided this. I could not stop thinking of what Ivalu had told me, but I could not bring myself to talk about it. This is why my son does not have the name of Ivalu. He was born in the springtime and during the whole of the summer and autumn he remained thin and feeble because he did not want to drink milk. Each time I made him drink he vomited. At the end of autumn it seemed he would die, he was so thin. I lost patience, seeing him so sick, and I cried and cried and said to myself, 'Ivalu must have been serious when he told me that my son would die if I did not give him his name, as now my son is going to die.' My children Arnaannuk, Nuvvijaq, Amarualik, and Qatturaannuk heard my words and since I had not thus far given the baby the name of Ivalu, they began to call him Ivalu. The next morning, we found the baby to be much better and happier than he had ever been. In the days following he got much better and he grew quickly ... Now I know that it is necessary to take very seriously the people who want their name to be transmitted after their death (recorded by Saladin d'Anglure at Iglulik in 1971).

Iqallijuq lived at this time in the camp of her husband's parents, who had great authority in the region; she therefore had to respect their choice regarding the names to be given to descendants. The child had

already received four names at birth, two names of women and two of men, of which three were attributed following a dream which Iqallijuq had during her pregnancy. In this dream she was visited by her maternal aunt Nanuraq (the patient in the shamanic cure described by Rasmussen (1929); also see Oosten 1984), and by Nanuraq's husband, the shaman Makkiq. They indicated that they were thirsty and requested something to drink. In the same dream the old woman Kalluk, Iqallijuq's mother-in-law's former co-wife, and the midwife of three of her children, was sleeping next to her. She had died several months earlier. All of these signs were interpreted as imperative wishes expressed by the dead that their names be given to the newborn. The fourth name was that of a friend of the family who was also deceased.

Because of this variety of names coming from people of both genders, in particular Iqallijuq's uncle and aunt and the former midwife, the child was dressed one day as a boy, the next day as a girl. He had long hair, but it was not braided, and he was nevertheless educated more as a boy than a girl.

At the time of the next pregnancy, numerous signs indicated that the foetus was male (the darker colour on the areolas of the mother's breasts, the oval form of her abdomen, etc.). Then Iktuksardjuat, her father-in-law, died. He had been a shaman and a prestigious chief in the Iglulik region, and he had lost an eye in a hunting accident.

During the delivery, the baby boy 'split himself,' and transformed himself into a girl, a *sipiniq*. He was given the name of Nataaq, a young cousin of Iqallijuq's who had died of cold and hunger the year before; it was desired, by means of the little namesake, to warm and feed the deceased. The newborn also received the names of Taqaugaq and of Qattalik, two deceased brothers of her father. Several days after his birth, Iqallijuq dreamed of her deceased father-in-law, but she did not dare to evoke this dream in front of her mother-in-law who had just served as her midwife, nor did she dare propose to give the name of the old patriarch, judging it incongruous that his name be given to a girl.

But the baby fell ill; an infection began in one of her eyes, the same eye which her one-eyed grandfather had lost. The baby's little brother, Makkiq, was greatly afraid of the harm that had come to his sister. The equally frightened mother decided to admit her dream, and under pressure from all her family, she gave the name Iktuksarjuat to the baby, who recovered rapidly. The child was dressed as a male until adolescence, and several years after her marriage, she still wore men's

pants. Iktuksarjuat had a completely masculine identity because all her names came from men. She is, with this prestigious name, the father of her father and the father-in-law of her mother. Her first woman's knife was offered to her not long ago, when she was thirty-nine years old, and when she has the opportunity she dresses herself as a hunter and goes to hunt with her husband. It is not rare that she brings back game. Never, she told us, had she played girls' games; by contrast she knew all the boys' games.

Three years later, Iqallijuq was again pregnant. A girl was expected: her abdomen was clearly rounded and the foetus was good-sized, both distinctive feminine signs. The mother-to-be and her husband were well pleased; they wanted to have a daughter.

When the time of the delivery came, Ukumaaluk gave his wife the necessary help, but to their surprise, the baby transformed herself into a boy; his scrotum was scarcely visible (cryptorchidism?) and his penis was atrophied (*angut illuangani sipijuq*, 'a boy split the other way'), according to the grandmother (see Dufour 1975: 67 regarding the same case). He was given the name Uqi, the name of Iqallijuq's first son, whom she had had to give up for adoption when she was first widowed. He had just died. He received as well the names of Uqi's adoptive parents, Nanuraq, the father, and Uliniq, the mother. Ukumaaluk insisted that they also bestow the name of one of his deceased cousins, Uviluq. Several days after his birth, Iqallijuq dreamed that her mother-in-law, Ataguttaaluk entered into her home, sat down, and said that she wanted to live with them; an evident sign that she wanted her name to be given to the newborn child; this was immediately done. Uqi was dressed as a girl; but he preferred the habits of a boy, and his mother did not try to change this.

If one makes a balance sheet of these siblings, one finds that of the six live births kept by Iqallijuq and Ukumaaluk, two were born girls and given a girl's education (Arnaannuk and Qatturaannuk), two were born boys but because of their names, which came as much from women as from men, they were partially transvestite (Nuvvijaq and Makkiq), two changed gender at birth, the first from boy to girl (Iktuksarjuat) was a complete transvestite, the second from girl to boy (Uqi) was partially transvestite.

The same person can be known and designated in the region of one of his namesakes by one name, associated with a complete identity by the relatives of that region, and in another region, by that of an ancestral namesake, under another name and identity. To speak of a domi-

nant identity is therefore always relative and contextual; it depends on the people one addresses, and where they are found.

Varieties of Gender Overlapping

All sorts of degrees and nuances of gender spanning exist, the dominant features of which we shall attempt to bring out. Sexual/gender spanning ranges from 'physical' change at birth (*sipiniq*), and the physiological effects which that may involve (for example, capillary implantation, form of genital organs, temperament), to the psychic gender spanning which results from a plurality of gender identities, linked to the multiplicity of personal names and associated kin statuses (for each name, the child receives the kin appellations and the designations of the namesakes). Cross-gender qualities are marked by clothing (which can come from a little symbol of the other gender, for example, a lock of hair, a slightly modified haircut, an article of clothing), by technological overlapping (the use of tools reserved for the other gender), and by religious and symbolic overlapping (related to prohibitions and prescriptions attached to each of the genders). Gender overlapping varies from total transvestism, to transvestism of only half the body (consider the example of Nuvvijaq), to alternating transvestism (one every other day, as in the case of Makkiq), to temporary transvestism (during the first years only, or only in certain circumstances).

Necessary and Sufficient Causes for Gender Overlapping

We think that the possession of a name coming from a namesake of the other gender is not in itself a sufficient condition to bring on transvestism and the inversion of gender roles, although it is a necessary condition. If we now establish a gradation between having:

- only the names of namesakes of the same gender as oneself;
- one or several names, among others, of namesakes of the other gender;
- a majority of names of namesakes of the other gender;
- only names of namesakes of the other gender;

one would doubtless find a rising correlation between the probability of inversion of gender identity and of transvestism. That is to say that among individuals whose names all come from namesakes of the other

gender you will find the most enduring and the most marked transvestism, as well as a high degree of socialization in the tasks and habits of the other gender.

Next comes into play the degree of emotional intensity which marks the relations between the close relatives of the child and the deceased namesake, as well as the more or less dramatic circumstances of his/her death. The more the relationship was strong and close, the greater the chance that one will try to actualize the gender identity of the namesake in the new holder of the name.

In the Iglulik region some people remember a married woman who, in the first quarter of the century, that is to say, before christianizing, hunted like the men when she was adult. She never had children and because of that, our informants say, she could hunt with her husbands. We do not have enough information about her case to know if she later adopted children. We have been told, however, of several cases of women, socialized as men, who, at the beginning of their marriage, continued to hunt with their husbands, entrusting their children to their parents-in-law. Some women, so as to continue their masculine activities, entrusted another woman with the care of their first-born. In Iqallijuq's case, her parents-in-law took away her first child and raised it after the death of her husband, claiming that she was inexperienced in domestic tasks.

The transvestite boy, like the transvestite girl, must eventually make the transition to his biological sex. This happens on the occasion of the killing of his first game animal. He often benefits from the tacit complicity of the men of his family who arrange for him to kill a feeble animal or fowl, located in advance. He is then hailed as a great hunter, and he must abandon his feminine clothes. All sorts of nuances can nevertheless exist in order to facilitate this passage, and the interesting testimony of Briggs (1974) on parents who choose a son-in-law acquainted with feminine tasks (or the man who chooses as a wife a 'garçon manqué') could be interpreted in this sense.

We know several cases of couples in which the husband and wife had been transvestites in their childhood; their marriage allowed a harmonious re-establishment of the disequilibrium produced by their inverse socialization. At any rate these individuals were marked for their entire lives by their socialization. They entered into the category of the third gender, which we will see below, played a particular role in their society.

To illustrate the importance of symbolism in the operations of trans-

vestism and inversion, we will present the case of a person who was ordered by the group to execute a camp member who had become dangerous. After the execution, since he was afraid that the errant soul of the dead man would seek revenge, the killer decided to evade it by becoming a transvestite. To do this, he rounded the panels of his man's coat and made it look like the coat of a woman. Then he did the same with the points of his offensive arms, harpoon, arrows, and knives. Thus protected, he could continue to live in relative peace.

In addition, so as to demonstrate the subtlety of the system, we will cite an example borrowed from Iglulik ethnography: when a young girl (with a feminine identity) menstruated for the first time, her mother sent her to visit all the houses in the camp, in which she was congratulated and given something to drink, while it was said, 'Thus you have had a son' (see Saladin d'Anglure 1978). When, however, a young girl with a masculine identity has her first menses, she is hailed as if she had killed a big game animal. Dufour (1975) cites the case of a young girl who had recently begun her menses; she had received the name of the deceased father of her adoptive mother. The latter, when visited by a neighbour, remarked of the young girl, 'My father has cut up a whale!'

To try to synthesize the facts given, we would say that the system of the spanning of the borders between the genders operates on an anthroponymic and symbolic level. This spanning is made possible by the attribution of names and identities coming from the gender other than that of the child. Transvestism may operate only at a minimal level, that is, without external signs except for the use of kin terms reserved for kin of the other gender. Transvestism may also operate at the maximum level if, in addition to the dream portents or the signs expressed by the living or the dead, there are anatomical signs which at birth allow the diagnosis of a sex change in the infant, and if there is also visible transvestism, socialization in the tasks of the other gender, and, for reasons of gender ratio in the family, a systematic utilization of the knowledge and habits of the other gender.

Shamanism and the 'Third Gender'

We have now arrived at the third level of overlap of the gender frontier, that of shamanism and cosmic forces. This corresponds to the celestial vault of the cosmic model, which encircles the two others (those of the uterus and the igloo). Here we are in the space-time of myths, dreams,

trance, spirits, souls (of the dead and of game), and, certainly, shamanism. It is a place where material forms transform themselves and where psychic forces take form; where the helping spirits of shamans incorporate themselves in the shaman, to bring him light, power, and knowledge, and it is here that his soul escapes from his body to survey the world of humans or to penetrate into the other worlds.

In this cosmic and circular time-space, beings escape from Euclidian physics and its limitations - their senses and their powers have a greatly augmented acuteness - and they also escape death. From here all principles of life proceed and to here they return; the air encapsulated in the little ball which contains the soul (in the form of a miniature of the individual) and installs itself in the body at birth, or the soul itself which from miniature becomes double, at death, and then pursues an eternal life, or the great mythic spirits (usually humans) who have transgressed social norms or frontiers.

Here one is in the universe of *sila* (the cosmos, meteorological time, air, the external, intelligence) which has as master-spirit a strange figure of which the mediating and symbolic value has often been underestimated in anthropological work.

Inuit homonymic 'election' reveals certain characteristics which Frazer and Sternberg attribute to Siberian shamanic 'election' (or religious 'election' elsewhere in the world), such as the desire of a spirit to incarnate itself in a particular individual (often of the opposite gender), or the fact that this desire is somewhat similar to 'possession' or is frequently expressed through dream or trance. This analogy between the two systems suffices in itself to explain shamanic transvestism or 'gender change.' The distinction developed by Sternberg (1925) between spirit-masters and spirit-helpers is, moreover, interesting even though its existence among Inuit cannot be presumed for lack of precise ethnographic data.

Iglulik Shamans

No systematic ethnographic study of shamanism has been undertaken during the past fifty years in the Iglulik region – (if one excepts preliminary research undertaken by Thérien (1978) in this locality, an article by Balikci (1963) on the neighbouring Netsilik group, and the compilations of Oosten (1976) and Merkur (1985); nor has such work been done elsewhere in the central Canadian Arctic. However, some good descriptions are available, notably those of Captain Lyon, who took part in the

first expedition of 'discovery' in this region in 1824; those of Captain Comer, partially edited by Boas (1901, 1907); and those, by far the richest, of Rasmussen (1929), which include the detailed account of a shamanic cure. All of these observers met and interviewed active shamans. Between 1950 and 1970 we were able to include several former shamans in the course of our research. So did Fathers Mary-Rousselière and Van De Velde, as well as a few travellers and anthropologists. Subsequently, our inquiries were, for the most part, with the last secular witnesses of official shamanism. In the mid-1920s, shamanism began to be transformed into more or less occult practices marked by Christian syncretism.

From written or oral sources we have selected the examples of five shamans, four men and one woman, who lived at Iglulik between 1820 and 1930 and about whom we have sufficient information to establish a relationship between shamanism and the 'third gender' among the Inuit.

The first example is that of Tulimaq, reported by Lyon (1824 [1970]):

Amongst our Igloolik acquaintances were two female and a few male wizards, of whom the principal was Toolemak/Tulimaq/. This personage was cunning and intelligent, and, whether professionally, or from his skill in the chase, but perhaps from both reasons, was considered by all the tribe as a man of importance ... /He/ did not scruple to allow of my being present at his interviews with Tornga, or his patron spirit ... Toolemak's spirit with whom he conferred ... was a female; but he has on the whole no less than ten superior beings and a countless host of minor spirits. With the first ten he holds constant communion, and transacts with them all business relative to the health or worldly welfare of those who consult and pay him. The above important personages are thus named: Aÿ-willi-aÿoo/Aiviliajuk/ or Nooli-aÿ-oo/Nuliajuk/, the female spirit of whose conversation I have spoken; her father Nappa-yook/Nappajuk/ or An-now-ta-lig/Anautalik/, of whom more anon; Pami-oo-li/Pamiulik/, a male spirit of considerable importance; Oo-took or Oona-lie/Unaliq/, a male of gigantic size; Ka-miek/Kamik/, a female; Amug-yoo-a/Amaarjuaq/ and Atta-na-ghiooa/Atanaarjuaq/, two brothers, and as far as I can learn chief patrons of the country about Amityook/Ammittuq/; Puck-im-na/Pukimmaq/, a female who lives in a fine country far to the west, and who is the immediate protectress of deer, which animals roam in immense herds around her dwelling; a large bear, which lives on the ice at sea, and is possessed of vast information – he speaks like a man, and often meets with and converses with the initiated on

their hunting excursions; and the last is Eeghak/Ijiraq/, a male of whom I can obtain no information. (1970 [1824]: 228, 230).

It will be recalled that among the ten spirits mentioned three are feminine. Of these the most important, Nuliajuk, who seems to have the position of master-spirit, is none other than Uinigumasuittuq (who has become Takannaaluk), the mother of various human ethnicities and the mistress of marine animals. A second female spirit is Pukimmaq, mother of the caribou, the principal terrestrial game. We have no information on the third.

Among the masculine spirits will be recognized Anautalik, father of the mistress of marine animals (Unaliq, identified as a giant male, is the name given to the Cree). The male Ijiraq is one of the invisible descendants of Uinigumasuittuq, who dwell in the uplands to the northeast. The two mythical brothers Amaarjuaq and Atanaarjuaq are heroes still much renowned among the Inuit of Iglulik. As for the polar bear, we will recall that it is at once terrestrial and marine and often plays the part of auxiliary spirit.

The passage from Lyon also suggests that each of these spirits had particular functions under the authority of the master-spirit.

The second example is that of Qingailisaq who was originally from the Netsilik region but was adopted at Iglulik, where he married. Captain Comer met him during the 1890s and bought his shaman's cloak for the American Museum of Natural History. Franz Boas published Comer's manuscripts and remarkable photographs in his compilation of material provided by whalers and missionaries:

One of the angakut [angakkuq: shaman] of the Iglulik told the following story about his initiation. One day when he was caribou-hunting ... he killed three caribou. On the following day he saw four large bucks, one of which was very fat. He struck it with an arrow, and the caribou began to run to and fro. Its antlers and its skin dropped off, its head became smaller, and soon it assumed the form of a woman with finely made clothes. Soon she fell down, giving birth to a boy, and then she died. The other caribou had turned into men, who told him to cover the woman and the child with moss, so that nobody could find them ... After he had covered up the bodies, the men told him to return to his people and tell them what had happened, and to have his clothing made in the same way as that of the woman. The garment represented in Plate IX is the coat worn by this angakok, who claims that it is identical with that worn by the caribou woman, with the exception of the representation of her child, which he

added to it. The animal figures represented on the shoulders were explained to represent 'children of the earth' (Comer in Boas 1907: 509).

Twenty years later Rasmussen (1929) obtained further details regarding this story from Qingailisaq's son, the shaman Aava. According to the latter, the caribou were metamorphosed Ijiqqat (pl. of Ijiraq), descendants of Uinigumasuittuq. Were it not for the existence of the cloak and the reference to it, as well as the presence of metamorphosed caribou in the two stories, on comparing details, one might have supposed them to be two distinct tales. Nevertheless, these two accounts suffice to bring out the nature of the master-spirit of Qingailisaq – that is, an Ijiraq, feminine to boot – and to emphasize the importance of the cloak, one of the only shamanic cloaks known from the central Canadian Arctic.

The third example is that of the shaman Inirnirunasuaq or Unaliq, about whom Rasmussen (1930: 38) gives us the following information. Unaliq (the term means 'Cree Indian') had ten helper-spirits. The most powerful and influential of these was Nanuq Tulurialik ('white bear with eyeteeth'). He was a giant in the form of a bear, who came whenever called. There were also the following deceased members of the Netsilik tribe: Angusingarna and Alu, two men; Arnagnagluk and Kavliliukaq, two women. Then there were two nameless Chipewyan Indians (Iqqilik), two mysterious mountain spirits of the kind called Norjutilik, and finally Kamingmalik, a woman of the Tuniq tribe.

A remarkable feature of Unaliq's case is that his spirits include not only three women but also a White man (see the testimony of his wife in Rasmussen 1930: 36), two Chipewyan Indians, two mountain spirits (who might be considered Ijiqqat), and a Tuniq, in addition to deceased members of his natal tribe. Thus, he incorporated within himself ancestors, a giant polar bear, and above all those 'facets of ethnic variation' which constitute the progeny of Uinigumasuittuq; this is inscribed on the four cardinal points.

The fourth example concerns a great-aunt of Aava, Uvavnuk, who also received shamanic powers without human intervention:

Uvavnuk had gone outside the hut one winter evening to make water. It was particularly dark that evening, as the moon was not visible. Then suddenly there appeared a glowing ball of fire in the sky, and it came rushing down to earth straight towards her. She would have got up and fled, but before she could pull up her breeches, the ball of fire struck her and entered into her. At the same moment she perceived that all within her grew light, and she lost

consciousness. But from that moment also she became a great shaman. She had never before concerned herself with the invocation of spirits, but now ... the spirit of the meteor had entered into her and made her a shaman. She saw the spirit just before she fainted. It had two kinds of bodies that rushed all glowing through space; one side was a bear, the other was like a human being; the head was that of a human being with the tusks of a bear (Rasmussen 1930: 122).

This composite spirit which, according to the narrative, took advantage of her lowered trousers to penetrate her, made her a very powerful shaman. Shortly before her death, Uvavnuk held a great shamanic seance, in the course of which she declared that Takannakapsaaluk (Nuliajuk) had granted that after her death her camp companions would enjoy a great abundance of all known kinds of game; something which indeed occurred during the following year.

Niviatsiaq is our final example. He was the son of Uvavnuk and the cousin of Aava. One day he was dragged deep into the water and slashed by a walrus he had harpooned. Upon returning to the surface, he lost consciousness. When he regained consciousness, his very serious wounds were healed. He was kept isolated in an igloo for three days so that he would regain strength. He emerged a great shaman. The spirit of the walrus had changed him and had become his spirit-helper. Niviatsiaq later acquired a second spirit, a wolverine, then a third spirit, Amajurjuk, the mythical giant ogress with a large cloak having a dorsal pouch. She kidnapped humans and deposited them like babies in the pouch of her cloak. She seized him and placed him quite naked in her dorsal pouch. However, he had kept hold of his knife and he stabbed her in the back, killing her. Thanks to this new spirit, he became one of the greatest shamans of all time (see Rasmussen 1930).

Certain constants emerge from the five cases presented above – and from two additional cases presented in the French original (Saladin d'Anglure 1986: 86–9) but ommitted here: the first being that all of these shamans, it is evident or it can be presumed, had at least one spirit-helper of the opposite gender – Tulimaaq, the mistress of marine animals; Qingailisaq, a female Ijiraq; Aava, the feminine spirit Aava; Urulu, an Ijiraq male; Unaliq, a female Tuniq; Unavnuk, a male meteor, half-bear and half-human; and Niviatsiaq, the female ogress Amajurjuk. The constant which is second in importance is the presence in practically all of these cases of spirits belonging to the supernatural mythic world. A third constant is the presence of animal helpers such as polar bear, walrus, shark, wolverine, raven, and even caribou, in

their specific shapes, metamorphosed as humans, or in composite manifestations.

Another constant is the presence of the spirits of ancestors or of deceased near kin (sometimes epic heroes such as Amaarjuaq and Atanaarjuaq or members of the group whence the immigrant originated). Finally there is the employment of eponymous spirits, whether from the list of ancestors, that of mythic figures, or that of animal species – not exemplified here but well described by Frederiksen (1964) – concerning a shaman named Nanuq, polar bear.

One of the best examples for understanding the play of factors is possibly that of Iqallijuq, who assured us, after years of repeated interviews, that she would have become a shaman but for her Christian baptism. From portions of her life story scattered throughout this essay, we will attempt to bring out support for this affirmation. We observe in the first place that ever since her uterine existence she was marked by a particular predilection for shamanism, as a first child and also because of the death of her grandfather the shaman Savviuqtalik, whose name and identity she received. Then there is her gender change, and her transvestism, as well as difficult circumstances of her birth and her constitutional fragility, which necessitated shamanic intervention and the attribution of another name, that of Iqallijuq, her father's spirit-helper and a great figure of mythology. We should also mention the significant shamanic environment, with uncles, great-uncles, great-aunts, and cousins of both genders who were shamans. In addition, there were trials such as the loss of her father when she was still very young; the separation from her dear friend and cousin Ujaraq; her arranged marriage with a widower possessed by an Ijiraq and the dramatic death of this husband, carried off by invisible spirits; her husband's family's forcible adoption of her eldest son; and finally her own forced remarriage (Saladin d'Anglure 1980b).

At a very early age she had acquired clairvoyance, *qaumaniq*, which enables the possessor to see that which others do not see, whether it concerns prenatal memories, the conditions of her husband's possession, or again her artistic imagination which aroused Rasmussen's interest when she was only sixteen years of age and led him to ask her to design various types of Inuit clothing (Rasmussen 1929: 64–5). At least that is how she explained this collaboration to us.

Hers is an exceptional destiny, then, an identity strongly marked by the 'third gender,' a life full of ordeals, a genealogical position as the oldest of siblings, a kin group which included many immigrants from

neighbouring communities, several alliances with Whites, a kinship considerably oriented toward the 'third gender,' shamanism, and spiritual mediation (itself in the immediate context of various Christian denominations).

Conclusion

In order to arrive at the 'position' where the 'third gender' takes on shape and meaning, we have been obliged to adopt an approach that is structural, holistic, and ternary.

A structural approach is required because it permits us to discover the place which gender differentiations occupy in the cosmology as a model for all other differentiations and to delimit the principal levels of intelligibility wherein the Inuit 'third gender' is expressed, that is to say, the ontological, sociological, and shamanic or cosmic levels. These levels constitute a series of mirror images in the same way that the major stages of the reproduction of human life, infant socialization, shamanic intervention, reflect each other (see Saladin d'Anglure (1978) for a more detailed description of this mirror-image development).

In a coherent model that respects Inuit thought, a holistic approach is also required; it is closely tied to the preceding approach and is alone able to integrate the levels mentioned above. This model, which we have elaborated progressively in the course of years as our research has proceeded, reflects, with its four dimensions, the holistic concern. Because of it we have been able to draw together into an articulated whole the diverse elements that constitute the 'third gender.'

Notes

1 In all the cases of sex change at birth that we were able to collect, the informants mentioned observable signs that could be likened to genital anomalies frequently observed in populations under medical surveillance (see Sullerot 1978; Maranon 1931).

2 The origin myth of the first Inuit is strongly anchored in the Iglulik region. According to Aagiaq (1972) it was on the Igloolik island that these first two humans appeared; Aakulujjuusi was the name of the man, Uumarnituq that of the woman. On the testimony of more hesitant Inuit I had inverted these names in my first works (Saladin d'Anglure 1978, 1981). Boas (1901: 178; 1907: 483–5) also mentioned the name of primordial ancestors for Baffin Island, but without recounting their origin.

3 Guérin (1982: 132) has stressed this ambiguity and accused us of androcentrism because we retained 'two men' as the translation. She translates the passage as 'two humans,' and attributes to them the quality of androgynes. Guérin takes exception to our interpretation of 'sexual fission' when we say that it is the penis which splits. She says: 'The girl who results from the phenomenon of *sipiniq* is, certainly, split, but this is not a split penis. She represents rather a simultaneous synthesis of a masculine and feminine being (Guérin 1982: 134).

To put an end to this kind of discussion in which each one can let his imagination fill in the holes in the data, we publish below our translation of the Inuit myth found recently in an unedited Rasmussen manuscript which Regitze Søby has made available to us: 'Two adult men were born from two mounds of earth; when they were born, they became husband and wife, one having taken the other as spouse, this latter found himself pregnant with a prominent stomach and was soon about to deliver; when he went to deliver, his companion recited a magic formula and then the penis of the other split and a baby came out of it, it was a male; it is from him that the Inuit descended' (Account of Inukpasujjuk, immigrant of Nattilik in the Aivilik region, ms. of Rasmussen on the Iglulik, section XII). This text gives tangible proof of the sound basis of our interpretation of the two contested points; the male sex of the first two humans and the fission of the penis at the time of transformation of the pregnant man into a woman. We do not deny that certain informants also mention a penile retraction.

Both modalities of transformation of man into woman (splitting and penile retraction) are mentioned. It is true that in Guérin's 'androgynist' and somewhat Jungian approach, if the two first humans were androgynous, it would be more coherent if there was only the phenomenon of the retraction of the penis in one case and the dilation of the clitoris in the other, which would have created the necessary symmetry to establish, on this level of male-female relationships, the equality between the sexes dear to Guérin and to certain androgynocentric feminists.

LEE GUEMPLE

7 Born-Again Pagans: The Inuit Cycle of Spirits

ABSTRACT. To the Qiqiqtamiut of Qiqirtait (the Belcher Islands) in southeastern Hudson Bay, all souls are cycled. Each species, human and animal, has its own limited supply of souls which circulate in a closed cycle. The cycling process requires the ritual assistance of humans. The important process of naming members of this population is compared with analogous rites in other Arctic areas. To the Qiqiqtamiut souls, and therefore bodies, may move to various locations, but despite appearance to the contrary, human and animal populations never vary in size: Population dynamics is a zero-sum game.

In this essay I will explore the Inuit cycle of spirits or souls in the interest of determining whether this can sensibly be conceptualized as a form of 'reincarnation' as Euro-North Americans understand that term. My aims are modest: first, to provide at least a summary description of the cycle of both human and animal souls and then to characterize this as a process of 'continuous incarnation'; and second, to turn the analysis on its head and try to see what Inuit would find in our culture that would look to them like their soul cycle. Such an undertaking as this is essentially an exercise in what Geertz (1973) likes to call 'thick description.' I suppose the reader should be forewarned that we are not likely to end up back where we started. What will emerge is something other than confirmation of our own notion of 'reincarnation.' Of course, that's one of the reasons for undertaking the journey – to end up with what Gregory Bateson liked to call 'news of a new difference.' The second part of the inquiry is more like the kind of reversal that Roy Wagner cherishes – an Arctic version of 'Road Belong Cargo.'[1] (1981: 33–4).

The Sanikiluarmiut Inuit of the Belcher Islands

The Inuit 'theory' of the spirit cycle developed here rests upon a series of relatively concrete customary notions through which Inuit express the operation of their cosmos and the ontological make-up of the 'actors' that populate it. Elsewhere in the Arctic these same abstract notions are combined with others to produce a variety of concrete formulations concerning how humans and other creatures are spiritually composed, how the various ontological elements interact to sustain or undermine the course of some particular actor's life, and which of these elements 'survives' the death of an actor to be incorporated into the being of some successor. In 1966 the four existing hunting camps on what were then called the Belcher Islands were consolidated into a single settlement until then called Eskimo Harbour (Qudlutuq), the location of the Hudson's Bay Company store, located in the northern part of the archipelago. All Islanders now reside in that community which has been renamed Sanikiluaq, after one of its more memorable inhabitants.

I should perhaps underscore the fact that the cosmography described here is my construction, formulated from discussions conducted in the 1960s primarily at Sanikiluaq in southeastern Hudson's Bay, but also to some degree from materials gathered in the 1960s and 1970s at Rankin Inlet on the west coast, and Repulse Bay to the northwest. Even in the early 1960s most Sanikiluarmiut as well as most others disavowed commitment to the beliefs that contribute to this formulation: all claimed then to embrace a somewhat 'folkized' version of the 'Christian' cosmos. Sanikiluarmiut claimed that Protestant missionaries from the mainland had cautioned them to abandon all thought of their pagan past and not to discuss such matters with their children or even among themselves. Some of the people of Rankin (Qangakliniq) were embarrassed to speak of pagan usages such as this one, though most people in Repulse Bay (Nauyak) were prepared to discuss such matters openly and without concern. Although some were reticent to talk about such matters for fear that their salvation might be jeopardized everyone but very young children seemed to be well acquainted with at least some of what is described here so that it was still a real, if somewhat nostalgic, part of their cultural tradition. As might be expected, knowledge of beliefs was everywhere stratified by age, older people knowing more about and having a somewhat less self-conscious commitment to belief in the traditional system.

Reincarnation

We can begin by getting a good fix on our understanding of what reincarnation is about – as a means of formulating the task. Webster (1979: 1523) defines 'reincarnation' as 'rebirth (of the soul) in another body' or again as 'the doctrine that the soul reappears after death in another and different bodily form.' (The OED (1971: 2475) is more succinct though less useful for present purposes. The Oxford defines the term as 'renewed incarnation' and/or 'a fresh embodiment *of* a person'; italic in the original.) According to the Webster definition, then, something, the 'soul,' remains essentially the same while somethings else, the bodies which house it, change over time. If this definition can be accepted as representative of our underlying formulation of 'reincarnation,' then the initial task of attempting to understand the equivalent Inuit outlook should be to unpack their cultural understandings concerning the ontological status of both the 'body' and the 'soul' and to elucidate precisely how and under what conditions a soul may transmigrate from one corporeal expression, one body, to another.

The Body

In the Sanikiluarmiut cosmos humanity consists of three orders of creatures: Eskimos (*Inuit*), Whites (*Kadlunat*), and Indians (*adlat*). It is not clear when Caucasians were added to this cosmic formulation, but they are already included in the founding myths in some of the earliest first-contact accounts. In the more recent accounts, Blacks have also been included, classified as *Kadlunat quirngnitait*, 'Black Whitemen.'

Inuit consider themselves to be more human in bodily appearance than the other varieties of humanity because they were created 'In the beginning' with a human appearance, while the other orders of humans made their first appearance in the creation myths in the form of dogs. Human origins are accounted for in a myth about a young woman named Nuliayuq who is reported to be living with her father in a hunting camp by the seashore. After several offers of marriage – all refused – her father becomes angry and suggests that perhaps she should would prefer to marry his dog. (In the Copper Inuit version she marries several times, but then immediately abandons each husband.)

Shortly thereafter a stranger appears who exhibits some peculiar personal characteristics, the most evident of which is protruding canine teeth – like the fangs of a dog. (Inuit understand that he is in fact a dog in human form.) The stranger couples with the young woman, and in due course she bears a number of offspring, usually two, and both with the physiognomy of a dog. (In other accounts there are five offspring, some in human form, some with the form of a dog. In the Copper version some are dogs, some human, and some bears – both brown and white.) The father now contrives to reclaim his daughter by drowning the dog-husband in the sea. But the father's action alienates the young woman so that she leaves the camp to take up residence on a nearby island alone with her dog-children. Unable properly to care for them, she decides to set them adrift in the sea in her boots. One dog is reddish coloured, the other almost pure white. (In the Copper version they are brown and white bears, and the woman merely deposits them in various parts of the world.) The boots drift away on the tide, and their cargoes survive to found the White race, the *kadluna* and Indian race, the *adlat*, which in Sanikiluaq means the Cree. (In the Iglulik account the woman's dog-children become Whites and Indians, her children in human form found the Inuit race.) Nuliayuq is thus credited with being the Inuit equivalent to 'Eve' and her dog-husband equivalent to 'Adam' – the founding ancestors.

As the story recounts, the Sanikiluarmiut believe the body to be a union of two contributions: bodily substance (or the material component), contributed by the mother, and the shape or appearance (we would probably say 'form') contributed by the father. The process of producing the body is believed to result from sexual intercourse, and this results in the birth of a child which will have the appearance of its father and the substance of its mother. (The mother is also accountable for the wholeness and completeness of the newborn. Qiqiqtamiut believe that if a pregnant woman observes the required dietary restrictions a child will be born well formed, but that if she violates these a child will be born misshapen.) The production of the bodily dimension of humanity is thus attributed to a process that we would recognize as essentially biological in character.

Bodily material and appearance individuate – it is through these corporeal manifestations that humans may be differentiated from one another. Neither of these aspects of being is ontologically paramount, however. Both are thought to be transient aspects of existence. Bodies, after all, come and go.

The 'Soul'

The formulation of the spiritual dimension of human existence – what we should be inclined to label as 'soul' – varied considerably across the Arctic even prior to contact, and numerous differences in detail are registered in the literature covering the region. While a thorough account of all the variations is not here, presented I have attempted to indicate some of the differences in notes.

Sanikiluarmiut characterize the soul component as consisting of the *atik* or 'name' (pl. *atit*), and the *sauniq* or 'bone' (pl. *saunit*).[2] There may be yet another dimension of being which a few natives, identified as 'breath,' puuyuq, literally 'he breathes'; see also the Greenlandic notion of the soul as 'breath' in Rink (1875: 36). This aspect appears also to refer to the animate aspect of human existence. This dimension was (in 1962) a very poorly developed part of the complete characterization of humanity, I think because it was a vestige of an older but now obsolete formulation.

The name denotes the identity of a being – both as a label and as a 'personality' (detailed accounts of this element have been published elsewhere, for example, Guemple (1965, 1979), so only the barest essentials are considered here). The 'bone' refers to the social dimension of that identity. It serves to identify as a unity all those who share the same name and hence the same social personality.

Both components come to be associated with an individual four days after birth when a newborn child is named. In the Inuit cosmos, as elsewhere in the 'primitive' world, to name a thing is to evoke it: to utter the name of something is to call forth that which it identified. Hence, a name does not merely 'point to' the animate part of a human, as it would in our cosmos. Instead, it is believed to embody the spiritual element – what I will hereafter refer to variously as the *atik* or the 'name spirit' of a child. The term 'spiritual' is, of course, my gloss not theirs.

Further west in the Arctic multiple names are said by some authorities to be conferred at birth. Being given three or four names does not appear to be unusual; see, e.g., Jenness (1922: 167), and Balikci (1970: 199–200) who reports one individual who apparently received twelve names. A Belcher Islander, however, receives but a single name at birth and retains that name, and the name spirit associated with it, throughout his or her lifetime except in cases where an individual's life appears to be threatened by the name-spirit, or its loss, in which case the name

may be ritually changed. Name changing is most often employed as a method of curing sick or excessively fussy children. Such a change may be undertaken through a ritual ceremony called *atiktasiriivuq*, 'to take another name' or, in the modern era, through christening – the Christian ritual where an 'official' christian name is conferred upon a child. In the case the *atik* awarded the child through divination is replaced by another from the stock of traditional names.

The *atik* embodies who the individual 'really is'; and it is from this acquisition that the social characteristics, peculiarities – even the skills which a child can manifest throughout its corporeal existence – are acquired. Hence, the act of naming is in fact a process of determining what established personality the recipient will be expected to manifest in life.

Balikci (1970: 198) argues that the Netsilik Inuit have three soul elements, which he labels 'personal,' 'name,' and 'ghost,' for example, of a deceased person. He provides a term for only one of these elements, however – i.e., for the name spirit which the Netsilik call *inoseq*. The *inoseq* has much the same properties as the *atik* as described here (1970: 199), though Balikci characterizes an ancestor's name spirit as acting in the role of 'guardian spirits' to its new born namesake. *Atit* (pl.) are sometimes represented by mainland Inuit as having the appearance of diminutive birds and are even now sometimes depicted graphically in modern Inuit sculptures as perched on the shoulders of human figures. Qiqiqtamiut never represent them in this way, however, and elsewhere in the Arctic (e.g., in Greenland) the bird image is identified with one of three 'soul' components, the *angiyang*. For a summary of the Greenlandic ontological formulation see Kroeber (1899: 307–8) who cites Rink (1875) as his source.

Name spirits do not, strictly speaking, individuate their owners. All those who bear a common name are considered to participate in a single spiritual (and social) identity, literally 'of the same bone' (*sauniriit*). Thus, a newborn is thought to assume the identity associated with one or more known bearers of its name, and in some sense to inherit with the name all the traits of character which those others possess.

Differences between east Hudson Bay usage and that of groups further west have been the cause of some debate because the Western Inuit have several names conferred upon them at birth. A Western newborn will commonly be given not one but several names at birth, and it is on the basis of this multiple naming custom that some researchers have argued that the east Hudson Bay is anomalous. My own research in Rankin Inlet and Repulse Bay, both Western commun-

ities, suggests that the connection between a name and a social identity is the same on the west side of Hudson Bay as it is on the east coast, but with one exception: that whereas on the east coast the inheritance of a single name at birth provides an individual with but a single well-established identity, on the west coast an individual is given several complementary (and by some accounts conflicting) identities that can be seen as expressing themselves in the comportment of any given individual. Jenness notes (1922: 167) that in the Coronation Gulf region individuals may use one name for several months and then switch to another. Stefánsson (1919: 357ff.) records what may be an important distinction. Noting that some of the accounts of name spirit inheritance appear to be at variance with others (compare the account on p. 320 with that of p. 357), he describes one native formulation of the concept of *nappan* as the local formulation of name spirit. In this account a child is born with its own *nappan*, the source of which is unclear in the account but could (see p. 358) be construed as having been inherited from a deceased relative. A child's family will subsequently call upon the *nappans* of deceased relatives to 'live in or by' the newborn in order to protect it from malevolent spirits, and these remain by the child until its own *nappan* is strong enough to sustain it (see pp. 358, 363). Stefánsson's extended description appears to provide a basis for a solution to the one-versus-many differences between the central and eastern Arctic conventions, a solution which, unfortunately, cannot be dealt with here.

Sanikiluarmiut hold contradictory views on the question of how a particular individual acquires its name and with it an accompanying name spirit. They say that no name can be conferred on an individual without the namers, usually the parents and close relatives of the child, having first secured the permission of a living name holder. When that person's name is conferred the giver becomes the *saunialu* or 'big namesake' of the one on whom the name is conferred. At the same time, there is tacit recognition among Sanikiluarmiut that the process of naming an individual is actually a process of divination. A name is conferred in a ritual the aim of which is to discover what name spirit has been sent from the spirit world to inhabit the body of a child (Guemple 1965).

Others who are also holders of the name become the *atia ualugiit*, 'name sharers' of the name recipient. The obligations and privileges of name sharers are not as great or as intimate as *sauniriit*. The name-giver and the name-receiver are considered by Qiqiqtamiut to be in some sense 'the same person.' It is for this reason that they treat the other's

relatives as their own and the other's personal property as their own. No Islander would borrow another's possessions without first securing the other's permission; but *sauniriit* are privileged to borrow and/or keep any property belonging to the other because, they explain, it is really their own property as well. The ceremony which accompanies the conferral/divination of the name of a newborn symbolically stresses mutuality and sharing very strongly (see Guemple 1965). The term *sauniq* appears to have its equivalent on the west coast of Hudson Bay in the expression *atiq* (or *atira*). Still, Stefánsson mentions 'saunirks' in his discussion of name inheritance among the Coronation Gulf Inuit (1919: 363), so the use of the east Hudson Bay coast term may be more widespread than is ordinarily reported in the literature.

Transmigration of Name Spirits

The disposition of souls after death varies widely in the Arctic. According to Rink (1875: 37) some Greenlanders believe that the souls of the dead go either to the upper or to a lower world. The former is cold and filled with want, the lower comfortable and rich with food. Those that go to the underworld are called *arsissut*, those that go to the other are *arssartut*. These latter play ball with a walrus head producing the aurora borealis. In Greenland the souls of the dead are not believed to enter the bodies of the newborn to supply the personum of the child but only to become the 'guardian spirits' of their descendants to whom their amulets and other magical tokens were left (Rink 1875: 63). A similar relationship is claimed for the souls of relatives in the Coronation Gulf region. In Cumberland Sound Boas reports (1901: 132) that at death one part of the soul goes to the abode of the sea goddess or else to 'heaven,' while the other enters the body of a child where it remains for about four months in order to strengthen the soul of the child. Thereafter it separates from the child but stays nearby in case it is needed again. But as elsewhere in the Arctic, stories tell of the souls of the departed which wander for a while and then come to be born again in an infant (pp. 133, 232). Finally, contra Rink, Thalbitzer (1941: 600) notes that in Ammassalik East Greenland a child receives the name of a deceased person at birth and with it that person's soul.

Atit are conceptualized as moving from the undersea world to the corporeal world in a closed cycle under the control of the Inuit principal deity of the eastern Arctic, in the Sanikiluarmiut dialect pronounced *nuliayuq*. In Baffin Island Boas (1880) noted that the principal female

deity is called Sedna, but no known Inuit group has since been reported as identifying her by this term. The source of this term thus remains a mystery. In Iglulik she is called takanaluk anraluk which Rasmussen (1931: 63) translates 'mother of the sea beasts.' In Ungava (Low 1906: 167–8) and the Netsilik region (Balikci 1970: 206) she is nuliayoq. In Greenland she is arnarkuagsak meaning 'old woman' (Rink 1875: 40). This mythic female is completely absent in the western Arctic even in the Inuktitut-speaking North Alaskan Inuit (Spencer 1959: 265) and is only one of a host of spiritual entities in most of the west Hudson Bay region where the cosmologies tend on the whole to be more elaborate than farther east.

At death the *atik* of the deceased is believed to remain in the vicinity of the host's body for four days, then to make its way to the undersea world where it remains till it is sent forth again by Nuliayuq to inhabit the body of a newborn child. Similarly, within four days of the birth of a child its name is 'discovered' by an act of divination – formerly by a shaman, more recently by someone with divinatory skills. The number of days associated with these processes appear to be ritually significant and vary from place to place across the Arctic. Thus, the Qiqiqtamiut say that a child need not be named till it is five days old, until which time it may be exposed or given up in adoption, and they also say that the *atik* of a deceased person stays around the body for five days after his/her death. Jenness (1922: 167) reports 'two or three days'; Boas (1901: 131) mentions three days in connection with the Cumberland Sound Inuit; Spencer (1959: 287) mentions four or five days as the period before which the child need be named. In many of these other cases too the period during which the name-soul remains around a deceased person corresponds to the time before which a child must be named. In Greenland (Rink 1875: 44) children are apparently named immediately after birth.

While in the spirit world an *atik* resides with Nuliayuq who is thought to be responsible for deciding what *atik* will inhabit what body. Elsewhere in the Arctic the souls of deceased members are sometimes differentiated on the basis of how they died and in some cases can be cast loose from the cycle of souls to become malevolent spirits (see Rink 1875: 44–5).

Once sent by her to inhabit a body, the *atik* is thought to be more or less permanently housed in the host; but it may sometimes become detached. The symptomatics of name spirit detachment are complicated but may include excessive dreaming, psychological dissociation (as

marked by radical mood swings or atypical behaviour), persistent bad luck at hunting, or physical illness – particularly in young children. The name spirit may also be judged to be incompatible with the body in which it is initially housed – as evidenced by the fact that the child on which it is conferred cries excessively or is unduly restless. In such cases a number of remedies are available, most of them undertaken in rituals which void a child's established ritual relationships and institute new ones with different personnel (Guemple 1969). The rationale for the shuffling of ritual relatives is that the name spirits of one or more of these may be incompatible with that of the child and hence are causing it to become ill or fussy.

Some human name spirits appear to have more potency than others. Theoretically, any current holder of a name may confer it only three times. Name spirits with vitality (as measured over a generation by the worldly success of living incumbents) are, understandably, more often 'discovered' to inhabit the bodies of newborn children than are other, less successful *atit*. Weaker name spirits (as measured by the fact that those upon whom they are conferred are unsuccessful in life or die early), and those associated with violence – whether because a living incumbent killed another person, was excessively quarrelsome, or died violently – are less often conferred upon children and over time end up given to no one. Inuit explain that these spirits have not been returned by Nuliayuq to dwell among the living, but have been sent to dwell in the sky and to become embodied in the aurora borealis. For all practical purposes these name spirits disappear altogether within a generation or two, though natives claim that this does not in fact happen.

The name conferral process can be seen *both* as a process of reincarnation and as a process of cyclical but continuous incarnation. The cycle is one of reincarnation in the sense that name spirits of the dead are believed to leave their bodies and return to the spirit world, whence they are once again sent to inhabit the bodies of societal members at birth. However, name spirit conferral is *also* conceived as a straightforward inheritance of names which flow always from living incumbent to living incumbent.

Qiqiqtamiut agreed that it was possible for name spirits with no living incumbents to be conferred upon newborn children, but they could provide no specific instances in their collective memory when conferrals of this sort had been made: all living Islanders were named after someone who was also living – at least as far as they could remember.

There is no 'escape' from the cycle of incarnation in the Saniki-

luarmiut formulation. Those who have led exemplary lives are thought to be assured that their name spirits will be conferred upon new societal members. Those who have led opprobrious lives or who have died by violence are thought not to be recycled – for the reason that any bearer of the name will live a life of misfortune.

The Cycle of Animals

In the Belcher Islands and elsewhere in the east Hudson Bay area dogs inherit dog names in the same way that humans inherit human names. In special cases human names may be conferred upon special dogs in which cases the animals take on special relationships to the humans whose names they share. Jenness (1922: 167) notes that in Coronation Gulf also dogs are sometimes given human names. Balikci reports that among the Netsilik dogs are considered to be spiritless; not so in the east Hudson Bay region.

Caribou have not been resident in the Belcher Islands for many years. In the distant past, when the Ungava herd was large, substantial numbers apparently migrated across the solid ice which stretched between the Belchers and the mainland in mid-winter; and these were sporadically hunted by the local Inuit population. With the decline of the Quebec caribou herd before the turn of the twentiethth century, the Belcher caribou population received no annual reinforcements and was hunted to extinction. Caribou no longer have a major place in Qiqiqtamiut cosmography and are included here only to show where they would be placed in an Inuit-drawn ordering of nature.

Sanikiluarmiut customarily classify animals together as *umayasiutit*, 'creatures which are hunted', a category which includes such diverse creatures as sea mammals (fjord, ranger, and bearded seals; walrus, beluga whales, and polar bears), birds, scavengers (such as wolves and foxes), caribou, even fish. Some aspects of their classification in the language (Guemple 1975) suggest a division of animals into two suborders one of which might be characterized as 'power' animals, the other as including 'ordinary' animals. Ordinary animals include fish, Arctic hare, ptarmagin, and perhaps fjord seals. Power animals include polar bears, walrus, wolves, and perhaps also foxes – animals which are themselves 'hunters' in some sense.

As might be anticipated, animals too have name spirits, but these are somewhat different from those of humans. Animals of the same species – except for dogs – share a single, collective name spirit, represented by

the collective name of the species. The namespirit of the fjord seal, for example, is that of the species name, viz. *natsik*, literally 'seal.' Other animal species are treated in the same way, again except for dogs. The sharing of a name spirit is causally linked to behavior, just as it is in human name spirits. Animals having the same name spirit are viewed as being endowed with a common personality, and this explains why they all behave alike. Animal spirits, like those of humans, cycle between the underworld of *nuliayuq* and the phenomenal world of human experience. And, like the universe of human spirits, the system of animal spirits is regarded as a 'closed' cycle: no new spiritual components can enter, and none are ever lost.

A second origin myth establishes *nuliayuq* as the origin of the principal game animals. In this story *nuliayuq* is reconciled to her father and once more co-residing with him. While he is away hunting one day a stranger approaches the camp in a kayak. The man calls to her so she leaves the house and goes down to the beach to talk to him. Sitting in his kayak (in the Iglulik version with his eyes covered by goggles presumably to protect them from the sun's reflection on the water), the woman finds his face handsome and his manner appealing. He invites her to sit on the stern of his boat and after she does so he quickly paddles out to sea carrying her with him. Once beyond the point of no return he pulls his kayak up onto an ice floe, stands up (and, in the Iglulik version, removes his goggles), thus revealing himself. The woman now sees that the man is puny and ugly (with distinctly red eyes). He is in fact a petrel (in different regions different birds – a raven, a perigrine, etc.) who has taken human form. They continue on their journey till they reach his camp where the woman resides with her bird-husband and has a child (in some accounts more than one) by him. The father, meantime, discovers his daughter's abduction and pursues the couple in an umiaq , a large open boat. Eventually he arrives at the bird-husband's camp while the latter, in company with all the males of his kind, is afield. The father rescues the girl and begins the homeward journey. The bird-husband now returns to find his wife gone. A chase scene follows in which the bird-husband first locates, then asks for the return of the woman and, when he is refused by the father, beats his wings causing a storm. The father, fearful that the boat will be swamped and his life forfeited, throws the daughter into the sea. Attempting to save herself, she clings to the gunwales of the boat. Unable to forceably loosen her grip, the father employs his hunting knife to cut off the last digits of the woman's fingers. These fall into the sea and

immediately the heads of seals appear in the sea around the boat. (Inuit understand that her fingertips have been miraculously transformed into seals.) The woman grips the side of the boat again, and once more the father uses his knife to cut away the second digits from both hands. These too fall into the sea and now bearded (square flipper) seals appear for the first time. Once more the woman reaches for the gunwales, and once again the father cuts. The remaining digits of her fingers fall into the sea, and now walrus appear. The woman, having nothing left to grip the side of the boat with, now flounders and disappears under the waves. In the Qiqiqtamiut myth, as in Iglulik, the woman sinks to the sea bottom where she is believed to reside in a 'house' with her dog-husband (in the Iglulingmiut version her father too drowns and comes to dwell at the bottom of the sea in a residence separate from that of the woman and dog-son-in-law) surrounded by those former parts of herself which have become the principal animals Inuit subsist on.

Apparent losses of animal and spiritual substance are generally explained as mere geographical displacement. Thus, during a conservation drive mounted by the Department of Indian Affairs in the 1960s, it was pointed out to Qiqiqtamiut that the walrus populations which formerly inhabited the Belchers were no longer to be found there (having been killed off in the 1920s by overhunting). The Inuit responded with the argument that they regarded the supply of walrus as having remained essentially constant, explaining the absence of the North Belcher herd by saying that it had merely 'gone farther north.' They made the very same argument in explaining the whereabouts of the former Thule culture inhabitants of houses located strategically around the perimeter of the Islands. These *tuniapiit*, as they are called, were also said to have 'gone further north' having been picked up by a ship which arrived on the west coast of the Belchers 'a long time ago' (but see Renouf 1921 concerning the ship's arrival). In the interest of preserving the rapidly dwindling population of eider ducks in the archipelago, the Inuit were instructed not to shoot eider ducks or disturb their nesting sites, not to take their eggs, and not to strip the eider-down from the nests. Islanders listened politely and complied with the government's requests while the officer in charge of the project remained on the Islands. After he left, however, they began to hunt eiders, gather their eggs, and fill their sleeping ticks with the down as they had before. They were at some pains to explain to me that the project officer was simply wrong about what was happening. In fact there

were no fewer eiders now than there ever had been. They recognized that there were at present fewer eiders nesting on the Islands than in previous years, but this they attributed to the fact that eiders – like the walrus, caribou, and *tuniapiit* – had simply gone elsewhere to find a home. The point is that, for Qiqiqtamiut, animal populations, like the supply of human 'souls,' is essentially a zero-sum game: no new 'players' can enter the system, none can permanently depart. They can only be recycled or displaced to some other location.

The spirits of animals enter the bodies of animals in response to the commands of the sea goddess. Upon being killed by a hunter, the animal's spirit returns to the spirit world where it remains till Nuliayuq sends it once again to the corporeal world as a newborn animal. Animal spirits recycle through death and rebirth just as humans do, provided that humans conduct the proper propitiary ceremonies. Only those animals which have powerful spirits require to have their spirits propitiated in ceremony. Men thus have some role in insuring that the flow of spirits to and from the undersea world is both prompt and orderly by leading exemplary lives.

Since the name spirit and the body are separate components of any given individual, and because under some circumstances the two may separate, it follows that mix-ups will sometimes result. Inuit mythology is full of examples of such mismatched creatures: humans whose souls have strayed and are thus 'empty,' creatures who are human in appearance but are actually bears on the inside, disembodied spirits of both humans and animals, all of whom are dangerous because they may attempt to get inside someone's body, causing sickness or death. Shamans fit in here as well: they are beings who are able to detach their spirits from their bodies at will in order to make spirit journeys to the underworld. Such journeys are possible because they are able to summon spirit familiars – usually in the form of animals – to inhabit their bodies while their own animating spirit is afield.

The Soul Cycle as a System of Continuous Incarnation

It is now possible to attempt a characterization of this system 'from the top down' so to speak – from the point of view of how it operates. The traditional Sanikiluarmiut cosmos is best characterized as populated by actors, both humans and animals, all of whom move back and forth between the corporeal world and the undersea home of a spiritual being named *nuliayuq*, who is the mythological source for both humans and

the principal animal species Inuit rely upon for their livelihoods. In theory no creatures, human or other, are exempt from the cycle or lost from the system, although some may be drawn off into other places where they effectively cease to be active or take on other cosmic roles. Human actors, those identified by names, have established personalities known to everyone in the community. An individual who at birth takes on one of these name spirits also assumes the burden of the community's definition of that personality and also what its skills and attributes are. Individual actors may contribute to the reputations of name spirits in their lifetimes and hence pass on something of a personal legacy to the next generation of name spirit holders. Islanders do not see these individual contributions as conflicting with the view that those who simultaneously participate in a name-spirit identity constitute to some degree the same personum. If my formulation of their views is accurate, their cosmos is populated by a cast of characters whose identities are well known and continuous. Individual humans – and individual animals – merely step into the cycle at birth, register what we might observe as a measurable impact on the social reputation of the character assigned to them, and then step out of the cycle again at death. But their individual contributions to the social definition of the characters must by virtue of the nature of the game, go unrecognized. In the long run, only the name spirit characters, human and animal, endure as eternal and unchanging entities.

It should be clear now that the Inuit name spirit cycle is less a system of reincarnation, properly speaking, than a system of collective continuous incarnation. The system is collective inasmuch as it consists of a cycle of well-defined, named identities whose properties are socially defined as enduring and unchanging and whose definitions are hence not reducible to the idiosyncratic characteristics of the incumbents to these roles. The system is continuous in the sense that at any given time there will be one or more individuals who occupy all the persona, and most will pass on their identities to others within their own lifetimes.

The Inuit Cycle of Souls and Its Mirror Image

An inquiry of this sort always involves an implicit comparison, namely, between our own understandings of the meaning of some lexeme or the institutionalized form it points to and that of some other language or people or culture. What we end up comparing in this case is two notions of cyclical incarnation.

I need not belabour the point that we are not ourselves altogether agreed on precisely what the terms 'soul' and 'body' imply in our own language and culture, much less whether souls can endure after the deaths of those who possess them. I will not attempt to set the record straight here but will merely point out one of the implicit understandings imbedded in our formulation is that a 'soul' is essentially a personal possession. That is, we believe that a given soul is particular to the person to whom it 'belongs' and, indeed, identifies and defines that specific individual uniquely and singularly. Our contempory cultural tradition remains devoted to rationalism and scientism and hence makes little provision for transmigration of any sort of soul substance; but if one may judge from the numbers of books on the topic which populate the shelves of trendy, 'new age' bookstores, we grow steadily more receptive to that possibility. Neither our culture nor the new age literature make any provision whatsoever for a transmigration of souls which bear already well-formulated social identities such as those I have described here for the Inuit.

About the only phenomenon similar to the Inuit case is to be found in the social reputations imputed to our famous families – like the Tudors, the Medicis, the Kennedys, the Bronfmans. (In the anthropological world there are few 'dynasties' although the Pitt-Riverses, the Turners, Redfields, Batesons, Leakeys, the Keesings, et al. might qualify.) The notion might be stretched a bit further to include the Papal inheritance, the Mormon Brotherhood, perhaps even the Olympic tradition. Surely here too can be found the notion of a socially well-defined identity that is collectively defined, socially transmitted from of members one generation to those of subsequent generations, and that constrains and shapes the behaviours and reputations of contemporary encumbants. We would hardly recognize that as 'reincarnation' by our cultural definition; but Inuit might see a plausible connection.

Notes

1 Wagner is referring to pp. 173–8, 191 of Peter Lawrence's 1968 book *Road Belong Cargo: A Study of the Cargo Movement in Southern Madang District, New Guinea.*

2 East Hudson Bay coast dialect employs an unvoiced palatal stop /-k/ in this environment. Dialects to the west emply a /-*q*/ a post-palatal unvoiced stop in the same context. Hence, Belcher Island *atik* becomes *atiq* to the west of Hudson Bay.

MARK NUTTALL

8 The Name Never Dies: Greenland Inuit Ideas of the Person

ABSTRACT. In northwest Greenland personal names are one of the most central features of community cognition. Upon death a person's name, or name soul (*ateq*) leaves the body and remains 'homeless' until it is called back to reside in the body of a newborn child, who becomes known as an *atsiaq* (pl. *atsiat*). As identity is closely associated with the name, identities continue in this way. The acquisition of a dead person's name embellishes or even creates a living person's genealogical and social identity. Kin relationships are extended beyond genealogical kin to encompass a wider network of people. As an image and memory of deceased persons, names are reference points in a complex network of interpersonal relationships. This chapter focuses on aspects of name beliefs in one Inuit community in the Upernavik district of northwest Greenland. In particular it points to the emotional intensity of the name and illustrates how a person is integrated socioculturally with a wide network of persons, both living and dead.

This chapter discusses aspects of the significance of the personal name among West Greenland Inuit, drawing on material from the village of Kangersuatsiaq in the Upernavik district. While there have been several recent studies of naming networks in Alaska and Canada (see Fienup-Riordan 1983; Williamson 1988), very little has been written about contemporary name beliefs in West Greenland. In Kangersuatsiaq and other villages in Upernavik district (Søby 1986) the name is one of the most pervasive features of daily life. As a social and spiritual component of the person, names continue after death by being given to newborn children. Each person is part of a wide network of actual and possible social alignments that encompasses both the living and the

dead. The continuity of the person, through the name, allows for the continuity of personal relationships, social life, and sense of community. However, there is nothing implicit in naming that informs people how to act and different meanings held by different people can and do lead to a situation of contested identities. It is not possible to go into all the intricacies of naming here, some of which I have discussed in more detail elsewhere (Nuttall 1992). In this chapter I restrict myself to discussing naming mainly as a mode of classification, as a phenomenon that confers a social identity on the person who, while being him or herself, is nonetheless regarded as a returned deceased relative.

The Setting

Kangersuatsiaq, which has a resident population of about 200, is situated in the southern part of Upernavik district. Upernavik is the most northerly district in West Greenland, extending from the Svartenhuk Peninsula at 71°28′ N up to Melville Bay in 75° N, where it borders the Avanersuaq/Thule district. The Inuit population numbers 2,149, with 1,350 people living in ten villages served by the administrative centre of Upernavik town, founded as a colony in 1772. In addition there are some 130 Danes in the district, living mainly in Upernavik town. Compared with other districts in Greenland, the Upernavik population is predominantly rural and monolingual. Geographically, Upernavik district is a pattern of islands with several large peninsulas jutting out from the inland ice. The villages are spatially organized to allow easy access to their respective resource areas (Haller 1986).

Kangersuatsiaq is more commonly known throughout Greenland by its Danish name Prøven, meaning 'tried.' Throughout the 1770s attempts were made to establish the netting of beluga whales at the site of present-day Kangersuatsiaq. In 1800 an approved whaling experiment was set up (Gad 1882: 256), and the history of Kangersuatsiaq is said to start from this date. While beluga whaling remained important during the nineteenth century, the Inuit population subsisted mainly by the harvesting of seals. Despite the recent beginnings of a small-scale inshore commercial fishery throughout Upernavik district (Forchhammer 1989), seal hunting continues to underpin the cultural fabric of Kangersuatsiaq. Hunters rely on catching ringed seals (*Phoca hispida*) during winter and spring, and to a lesser extent in summer. Harp seals (*Pagophilus groenlandicus*) and hooded seals (*Cystophora cristata*) are more important in late summer and autumn. Seal hunting not only forms part

of a larger cultural system, it provides the foundation for both a secure kin-based network and a sense of community. Although seal skins are sold to the KNI (Kalaallit Niuerfiat or Greenland Trade), seal hunting has not acquired a monetary incentive.

The sharing and ritual distribution of seal meat remains central to the ideology of subsistence, expressing the relationships people share with each other.

In Kangersuatsiaq, in common with other Inuit communities, identity and a sense of place are expressed with the suffix *-miut*, meaning 'people of.' The people of Kangersuatsiaq are thus known as Kangersuatsiarmiut, but refer to themselves as Kangersuatsiarmiit (*-miut* becomes *-miit* in the Kangersuatsiaq dialect, which is similar to East Greenlandic). In this way they identify themselves and they are identified by others with a particular place, and they are thereby distinguished from the inhabitants of other places within Greenland, such as the Kullorsuarmiut ('people of the big thumb'; Kullorsuaq), the Qerqertarsuarmiut ('people of the big island'; Qerqertarsuaq), the Nanortalimmiut ('people of the place of the polar bears'; Nanortalik), and so on. This chapter follows the use of the vernacular.

A Note on Kinship

Throughout Upernavik district descent is bilateral and surnames are inherited patrilineally. The term that can be used for a personal kindred, or immediate family, is *ilaqutariit*. The root of the word, *ila-*, means 'a part' or 'a companion,' and a member of the personal kindred is called an *ilaqutaq*, 'someone who belongs.' All those who share this relationship with others form an *ilaqutariit*. A distinction is made between an *ilaqutaq* and an *eqqarleq*, someone who is a genealogical or affinal relative belonging to another *ilaqutariit*. *Eqqarleq* derives from *eqqaq*, meaning 'the immediate vicinity/area,' or 'close to.' As a form of address and reference *eqqarleq* is not necessarily applied to distant kin, but its use depends on how a person defines his or her relationship with another person.

Social relationships in Kangersuatsiaq are defined in terms of being either kin or non-kin based. One important feature of Greenland Inuit kinship networks is that kin relationships can be created if individuals choose to regard a non-kin relationship as something similar to a genealogical or affinal link. This is most commonly expressed by the use of kin terms for both reference and address. A genealogical relationship,

however, can be 'forgotten about' if a person regards that relationship as incompatible or unsatisfactory (see also Guemple 1979). In Kangersuatsiaq it is common to hear someone consigning a member of their immediate family (i.e., an *ilaqutaq*) to the status of a relative (*eqqarleq*), or to regard a relative as a friend, denying any kin connection whatsoever. In many cases, people do the latter if they are involved in a sexual relationship with a second cousin (an *eqqarleq*).

For example, one man in his early thirties would constantly deny to fellow villagers that his second cousin was a relative because he had been involved in a sexual relationship with her some years before. He did regard her brothers, however, as relatives and would use the term for first cousin (*illoq*) when addressing them, while refusing to do this with their sister. In cases such as this, it is possible for people to consciously deactivate kinship relationships by simply ignoring them. Rosaldo makes a similar point in her ethnography of Ilongot social life. She says that kin ties can be 'discovered' and then recognized with labour exchange, but 'the reverse is also true, and when people choose to "forget" or "cease to know" kinship, labour exchanges come to an end' (Rosaldo 1980: 183).

Individual family households are suffixed with *-kkut* (for example Josepikkut; Josepi's household) and, with neolocal residence, there are usually several *-kkut* in an *ilaqutariit*. In turn, *-kkut* can also be suffixed with *-miut*, so that Josepikkormiut would mean 'people of Josepi's household,' or 'all those living in Josepi's household.' *Ilaqutariit* form quite distinct groups within Kangersuatsiaq and this is reflected in visiting patterns, mutual assistance, and the distribution and the sharing of meat, fish, and other hunting products.

The Kangersuatsiarmiit commonly say 'we are all related' and 'all Kangersuatsiarmiit are like brothers and sisters.' Individuals can probably trace genealogical connection with many people in the village, but often such ties are not accorded much significance. Genealogical knowledge is often blurred the greater the distance across the generations. Few people know of the cousins of their great-grandparents, for example.

In most situations of daily interaction personal names tend to be avoided, and kin terms are used as a form of address instead, usually in the possessive, for example, *ataataga* (my father), *paniga* (my daughter). This use of terminology is not only a statement of kin relationships, denoting actual genealogical and affinal relationship but, as will be shown, also acts to denote continuing relationship between the deceased

and the living. In a sense, because the name of a deceased person is seldom mentioned by members of the *ilaqutariit*, kin terms are necronyms (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 194).

The Idea of the Person

The earliest accounts of Greenland Inuit ideas of the person (*inuk*) come from eighteenth-century Lutheran and Moravian missionaries, such as Hans Egede (1818) and David Crantz (1820 [1767]). From their works we learn that Greenlanders viewed the person as consisting of body (*timi*), name (*ateq*, pl. *atit*), and soul (*tarneq*) and that they considered souls (*tarnit*) to be immortal. According to H.J. Rink (1875), before Christianity became the dominant world-view the Greenlanders believed that, after death, a person's soul travelled either to the underworld, a place with an abundance of game animals and where the souls of dead kin and friends would be reunited, or to an upper world of eternal starvation and cold. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, ethnographers and travellers among the Greenlanders contributed little to existing knowledge about the concept of the person, concentrating instead on general accounts of hunting and material culture.

Today, in the villages throughout Upernavik district the name is regarded as a social and spiritual component of the person, something that is closely connected with the other spiritual components of *tarneq* (now understood as soul in the Christian sense) and *anersaaq*, the breath soul (*anersaarpoq*, breathes; *anerneq*, breath/spirit). In Kangersuatsiaq people say 'my name is like my soul' ('*atera* soorlu tarniga'), and throughout the rest of this chapter I shall refer to *ateq* as both name and name soul.

Childbirth marks the beginning of life as a person in only one sense, and the Kangersuatsiarmiit say that to become a full or proper person a child must be named. The importance of the name for according the status of social person on the child is widespread throughout the Inuit area (see, for example, Balikci 1970: 148, Guemple 1979). Childbirth is the process whereby the foetus (*illaaq*) is brought to a 'state of life' (*inuuneq*, also meaning 'the state of being a person'), finally separated from the womb (*illiaq*) and coming into the world as a *naalungiarsuk* (baby). The verb *inunngorpoq* refers to the parturition process but, while it is important to talk about a baby being born, an important linguistic link is missed by simply translating *inunngorpoq* as 'is born.' *Inunngorpoq* comprises the root *inuk* (person) and the postbase *-nngorpoq* (becomes),

thus meaning 'becomes a person.' The Kangersuatsiarmiit say that while the foetus is alive, it is waiting to become a person (*inunngormut utaqqippaa*). In some ways, this may account for the ambiguous contemporary attitudes towards the high rates of abortion in modern times and towards infanticide in the past.

Naming in Kangersuatsiaq

When a person from Kangersuatsiaq dies his/her name soul leaves the body and is said to remain 'homeless' until it is recalled to reside in the body of a newborn child. A person who is named after a dead person is called an *atsiaq* (pl. *atsiat*), but the first same-sex child to be born after the death of another person is called that person's *ateqqaataa*. The dead person, who can have more than one *atsiaq*, is known as the *atsiaq*'s *aqqa*, which is another word for name.

Throughout many parts of the Inuit area the name is not tied to either sex, and a child can receive the name of a deceased male or female. However, this is not the case in West Greenland. By the end of the nineteenth century, Christianity was well established as the dominant religious world-view, the Greenlanders took Danish personal names, mainly originating from the Bible, and soon most traditional Inuit names were no longer in common usage. Today, personal names of Danish, European, and biblical origin are often 'Greenlandicized' in everyday use, for example, Daaveraq ('little David'), and Susaat (Susan). Patronymic names were also taken in the Danish fashion by using the personal name of the head of the family, for example, Kristiansen, Jensen, Immanuelsen, and Poulsen. Nowadays, in West Greenland all personal names are gender specific and a child can be named only after a person of the same sex. Furthermore, the *atsiaq* does not necessarily have to be born into the deceased's community. The whole of Upernavik district is characterized by close kinship and other social relationships and the first same-sex child to be born, in any village, will receive the name of a recently deceased person. Thus, it is quite common to find *atsiat* in other villages, such as Nutaarmiut and Upernavik Kujalleq named after dead people from Kangersuatsiaq, and vice versa.

As an *atsiaq*, the child enters into a multiplicity of relationships with the surviving relatives of its *aqqa*, who will all address the child by the kin term they would have applied to their dead relative. The child grows up to use corresponding terms of address, which means the actual use of terminology diverges considerably from the use of terms

that denote genealogical and affinal relationship. For example, a dead woman's *atsiaq* will be called 'mother' (*anaana*) by that woman's children, and 'wife' (*nuliaq*) by her husband. In addition to her *aqqa*'s father calling her 'daughter' (*panik*), she will be called 'daughter' by her genitor. Furthermore, it may be that an *atsiaq* belongs genealogically to his/her *aqqa*'s family, which complicates the use of terminology further. In this way, an *atsiaq* who is named after his maternal grandfather, for example, will address his mother as 'daughter' (*panik*), his father as 'daughter's husband' (*ningaaq*), and his grandmother as 'wife' (*nuliaq*). In this way children learn the identities of those they are named after and acquire a knowledge of the various relationships that link them to an intricate pattern of genealogical and affinal kin.

On an emotional level, when a child is named, thus becoming an *atsiaq*, the bond between deceased and bereaved is re-established. The dead person is said to have 'come home' (*angerlarpoq*) to the bereaved kin. There is a sense that people are not naming a new person, but are welcoming back a member of family and community. A child does not take a new name, thus becoming altogether another person in the cosmos, but re-enters an existing order of being, of which their name at least is already a part. As it can be argued that absence is the essence of death, the transmigration of names ensures that a recently deceased person's presence can be experienced in the present.

During my stay in Kangersuatsiaq I was associated with a family headed by a man named Josepi (all names in this chapter are pseudonyms), and lived in the house of his youngest son, Juuna. Josepi was sixty-three years old and had a reputation as an *ilisimatooq*, a wise or learned man, and as a *piniartorsuaq*, a great or big hunter. Sadly, towards the end of my fieldwork, Josepi died quite suddenly in the hospital in Upernavik town after a brief illness. His second eldest son, Eirik, came to Junna's house to break the news, and I left Junna, thinking he might want to be left alone, and went for a walk through the village.

After an hour I went to Josepi's house. By this time the news of his death had spread through the whole village. One old man was sitting with the family, and later several older men and women walked in. Some questions were asked about the time and cause of death (a heart attack). Most of Josepi's family remained sitting in the living-room, while one of Josepi's nieces was busy making coffee, washing cups and saucers, and putting out cake on the table. Josepi's sons and daughters continued to welcome fellow villagers against the incessant noise of

videos shown to occupy the children. Initially my impression was one of normality, but the atmosphere of the house was punctuated with prolonged bouts of silence and emotion as the women showed their grief with periodic bursts of crying.

Three days later, Josepi was buried after his body was returned to the village from the hospital in Upernavik on the supply boat. The day following the funeral, the news came through to Josepi's family that a baby boy had been born in Upernavik Kujalleq, the village immediately south of Kangersuatsiaq. The news created intense excitement and a fervour of activity followed as presents were bought for the child. To everyone in the village it was clear that the child would receive Josepi's name and would become his *ateqqaataa*. The supply boat was expected to call at Kangersuatsiaq later that afternoon en route to Upernavik Kujalleq, and it was arranged that the presents would be taken by someone travelling with it. Over the next few days the family's talk revolved around plans to visit Upernavik Kujalleq for the baby's baptism. A week or two later, the news came through the Upernavik town that Josepi's sister's son's wife had given birth to a baby boy. Again, the family was overjoyed for, although it had not been formally announced what name the child was to receive, it was known that he would be called Josepi. Josepi's family travelled through to both Upernavik Kujalleq and to Upernavik town for two baptisms, and there was much celebrating afterwards.

Despite the birth of an *ateqqaataa* in another village, the first same-sex child born in Kangersuatsiaq after a death will receive the name of the deceased person. The *ateqqaataa* remains important to the family, but having an *atsiaq* in the village acquires deep significance. At the time of Josepi's death, Josepi's youngest daughter Naja was four months pregnant. When she gave birth I had left Greenland and was back home. I received a letter from Juuna telling me Naja had given birth to a son. He went on to say that the boy was to receive Josepi's name (*'ataatama ateriniarpaa'*) and that 'we are all happy' (*'tamatta nuannaarpugut'*). From subsequent letters from Juuna and from my experiences and observations in the field, I can only surmise that this meant a great deal to Josepi's family.

Once named, children begin to learn the identities of the people they are named after and acquire a knowledge of the various relationships that link them to an intricate pattern of genealogical and fictive kin. As the child is named after people who had previously occupied positions in the kinship network, to some extent roles and interaction between

atsiat and the family of the *aqqa* are prescribed. However, this does not tell us of the person's own sense of identity and feelings of being named. Other people do the naming, ensuring that they continue to experience the memory of a deceased relative and loved and valued member of the community in the form of an *atsiaq*. There are a few cases in Kangersuatsiaq, though, where the *atsiaq* forms stronger attachments to people depending on their own preference to one of their names. An example is a five-year-old boy called David Peter. Although the *ateqqaataa* of a man called David, the boy prefers Peter as a name for himself. As a result, he spends more time in the house of a woman whose husband Peter is the boy's other *aqqa*, than he does in the home of David's family.

Angerlartoqut

The emotional intensity of name beliefs in Kangersuatsiaq finds further expression in a specific category of *atsiaq* called an *angerlartoqut*. An *angerlartoqut* is a child named after its own dead sibling. *Angerlartoq* means 'one who has returned home,' deriving from the verb *angerlarpoq*. The suffix *-qut* means 'belongs.' If a child dies, the first same-sex child to be born to its mother will become the dead child's *atsiaq*. The Kangersuatsiarmiit then say that the dead child has 'come home' to its mother and father. The parents avoid using the child's name and any other siblings will address him/her with the appropriate kin term they applied to the dead child. In this way an older brother or sister becomes a 'younger' sibling but the term for older sibling is applied. The parents avoid the use of a kin term such as 'son' or 'daughter' and will address their child as *'angerlartoqut,'* or in the possessive form such as *angerlara/ angerlaga* (my *angerlartoqut*), or *angerlartoput* (our *angerlartoqut*).

There is deep significance for the bereaved parents in having a returned child. However, an *angerlartoqut* may not fill the void left by the death of a loved son or daughter. For example, in 1975 Ane K.'s three-year-old daughter died following a short illness. One year later, Ane gave birth to a baby girl, an *angerlartoqut*. Like other parents who have an *angerlartoqut*, Ane paid special attention to any similarities to her dead child that the *angerlartoqut* showed as she developed her personality and character. However, the *angerlartoqut* began to show a different character to that of her dead sibling. Ane began to comment on this to her family and friends, and it became known throughout the village that she had not got over the death of her first baby daughter. She

would tell others that her *angerlartoqut* was not Susaat (her dead child), but that she only had Susaat's name.

Seven years after the birth of Ane's *angerlartoqut*, another woman, Juditha L, had a baby girl whom she named Susaat, after Ane's first daughter. Juditha's daughter thus became Susaat's *atsiaq*, and Juditha explained to me that she had named her child after Ane's dead daughter because Ane was 'still looking' (*'Suli ujarlerpoq'*) for her daughter.

Name-sharing

Names are also something to be shared with other people and children, as *atsiat*, not only enter into a complexity of relationships with their genealogical families and those kin of the *aqqa*, but they also continue their close social association with name-sharers (*atiik*; name-sharer). Again, names are avoided and the reciprocal form of address is *'atiitsara,'* 'my name-sharer.' A child called Juuna, for example, will be the name-sharer of all those who have the same name. The relationship will have already been established between his *aqqa* and all other men called Juuna.

It is not possible to go into the complexities of name-sharing here but, among many things, it does allow for the extension of kinship beyond the *ilaqutariit*. Indeed, it is possible, at least theoretically, for a person to include virtually everyone of the same sex as kin through the name. A person will also address the consanguineal kin of their name-sharer by the terminology they themselves use. Thus, a man will address the younger sister of his name-sharer as *naja*, and his father as *ataata*. If the younger sister happens to be the *atsiaq* of his name-sharer's mother's sister, then he will call her *aja* (mother's sister). She will then reciprocate with *ujoroq* (sister's child), just as she does with her brother. In this way, a person will address as many other people with kin terms as they have name-sharers. Parents refer to the name-sharers of their offspring as 'our daughter' or 'our son' and may give them gifts on birthdays or at Christmas, although this is not obligatory. It is incumbent on name-sharers to exchange gifts on these occasions, however.

Through a name-sharing relationship there is an enormous range of other possible relationships to enter into, although it is often a matter of choice how far a person wishes to develop something based on kin terms applied to a name-sharer's close kin. It may be nothing more than a way of addressing one another, or it may possibly be regarded as a little more significant. In some cases, sharing a name is not a prerequi-

site for establishing a name-sharing relationship. People who have close association as friends, hunting and fishing partners, or who are even genealogically related may address each other as *atiitsara*. Such people are 'fictive' name-sharers usually on the basis of some shared experience, and the reciprocal use of name-sharing terminology acts to commemorate that experience (see also Rosaldo 1980: 11).

Contemporary name beliefs raise questions about the meaning of kinship not only in Greenland and other parts of the Inuit area, but for kinship theory in general. Elsewhere I have discussed what are seen as 'real' kin relationships (Nuttall 1992). These are the relationships that individuals give meaning to, either idiosyncratically or collectively in the case of an *atsiaq*. This does not mean that actual kinship, that is, kinship based on putative biology, is entirely forgotten about. Non-biological ties defined as meaningful are ultimately recognized as fictive when sexual relationships and inheritance are taken into consideration. The equivalence of terminology through name-sharing does not mean the equivalence of blood, so there are no incest taboos that apply between an individual and the actual kin of his/her name-sharer.

The existence of an incest prohibition for immediate genealogical kin extending as far as second cousins, however, does distinguish between categories of kin defined in terms of biological or sociological criteria. Furthermore, inheritance also recognizes the importance of genealogical connection. A son (including adopted sons) inherits seal, beluga, and salmon netting sites from his father. Campsites also go the same way. Equipment and material wealth become the property of offspring, but *atsiat* and name-sharers have no claim and expect no hereditary succession to property. The continual expanding of the universe of kin contracts and emphasis is strictly genealogical.

Names and Community

In Kangersuatsiaq, naming conveys a sense of continuity, sociability, and community. A person's name is not only part of a complex pattern of relationships, it is a vital link in an overall chain of social, psychological, and emotional support. A change in the name, or a change in naming practices, would sever the link that gives a sense of identity with others. In his discussion of the psychological implications of changes in naming practices in the Canadian Arctic, Williamson says that Inuit lost 'names which were part of their source of integration with the traditional networks' (1988: 250). Contacts with whalers, fur

traders, and, more significantly, missionaries resulted in the adoption of European names and the rejection of Inuit personal names.

For the missionaries Inuit personal names were symbols of 'pagan' soul beliefs (ibid.). These changes resulted in a narrow network of personal relationships that 'increasingly isolated the individual Eskimo within his own person' (ibid.: 257). Williamson argues that there is little consideration of the damage done to naming patterns within an overall study of psychological problems experienced by Inuit. Integration into the wider society and the loss of identity it entails, together with the adoption of behavioural characteristics of that society, result in very little security and friendship. The loss of an important network of name relationships has implications for social fragmentation together with a damaging effect on the personality. Name change and network loss contribute to individual alienation (ibid.).

In Greenland the use of personal names and patronymic names of non-Inuit origin is now regarded as being traditionally Greenlandic. As mentioned above, Greenlandic naming also differs from that in Alaska and Canada because there the name is asexual. In the Greenlandic context, a long history of using Danish and European names has resulted in an institutionalized tradition of a gender-specific, non-Inuit network of names. This is not to suggest, however, that names lack any spiritual foundation. They are Christian in the literal sense that missionary activity changed the Inuit names, but the missionaries did not secularize them.

People in Kangersuatsiaq, through their names, do not disappear from the social map at death. They remain part of the community and continue to extend their network of possible social alignments. Thus, as discussed above, a recently deceased person will continue existing relationships through an *atsiaq* and will be linked to the name-sharers and kin of that *atsiaq*. This sense of continuity, together with other aspects of kinship, provides a secure foundation for the persistence of community. The assignment of different kin terms to the same person does not entail any degree of incompatibility, however. A person, as an *atsiaq*, has a complex network of relationships with which to contend and each is congruent rather than conflicting.

In many parts of Greenland, especially in the fast-growing towns in the south and on the west coast, modernization has had a severe impact on Inuit cultural life over the last forty years or so. In particular, kinship patterns and interpersonal relationships have suffered as a result of urbanization, the disintegration of small communities, and the erosion

of small-scale, local-level subsistence lifestyles. Imported educational, political, legal, and economic systems, together with the adoption of Western values, have all contributed to alienation and to the isolation of the person. Changing social structures have resulted in changing personal identities and a redefinition of customary Inuit relationships with the environment. In many cases, removed from a secure social environment, many individuals no longer experiences a continuity of both person and place. The villages in Upernavik district were, on the whole, isolated from the upheavals in Greenlandic society that took place as a result of social and economic development policies in the 1950s and 1960s. People in Kangersuatsiaq and other villages continue to live within a cultural framework that links the physical environment with an enduring social world.

Naming practices similar to those described for Kangersuatsiaq also persist in other peripheral areas of Greenland, as I have noted during fieldwork in the Thule district in the far north of the country and in the southernmost district of Nanortalik. Furthermore, a rich diversity of name beliefs is prevalent in East Greenland (Gessain 1980).

This chapter has only touched superficially on some aspects of naming in northwest Greenland. Name beliefs are conceptualized in various ways which are related, in turn, to a wide variety of life situations. These find expression in different levels of meaning and metaphor. Different people think different things about *atsiat* and about being an *atsiaq*. The changes in a person's understanding, owing to particular experiences, mean that a person may think different things about *atsiat* in different contexts, particularly when faced with birth and death. Naming illustrates one of the most outstanding aspects of Inuit culture: the emphasis on continuity, rather than finality, of both person and community. The link between person and name is inseparable; it is not an arbitrary association which is severed at death but a bond that integrates each and every person, both living and dead, present and absent, in a social and psychological network of interpersonal relationships.

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RICHARD SLOBODIN

9 Kutchin Concepts of Reincarnation[1]

ABSTRACT. The eastern Kutchin or Gwich'in of the Northwest Territories and Yukon, Canada, are Dene people who traditionally live by hunting and trapping. Through observations made at various times between 1938 and 1968, a pervasive belief in reincarnation was noted. Not only did all Kutchin take reincarnation as a fact of existence, but a number of non-Kutchin living in the area perceived some Kutchin to be reincarnates. The belief was universal although all modern Kutchin were raised as Christians and were made aware that reincarnation belief had no place in Christian doctrine. Not all Kutchin were perceived as reincarnated; in 1938–9 about one-tenth of the population were so regarded. The reborn included close kin, but also notable persons of former years, including non-Kutchin. A rebirth was preceded by announcing dreams. A process of secularization was noted for reincarnation belief; however, the belief did not appear to be dying out. Rather, it functioned in preserving community identity and cohesiveness.

In 1938, when I lived for the first time among the Peel River Kutchin, the chief's mother, Lucy Martin, then over eighty, became very ill. She appeared to be dying, but, a tough and almost indestructible old lady, she recovered to live another ten years. When she was strong enough to speak, she told of her experiences while dying.

I left my body lying in the tent and I rose up into the air. I remembered having done this many years before, when my children were small. That time, I was worried and frightened, but this time it felt fine. It was a bright sunny day and I could see the whole camp. Smoke was rising, dog teams were going here and

there, and I could see my great-grandson, Andrew, coming to my lodge with a load of good meat for me ...

Something was bothering me after all. I had to find a new mother, some woman who was going to have a baby. I thought of Rowena, Andrew's wife. She was a good girl and would be a good mother. But she was not going to have a baby ...

Nobody in camp was. I could not be born again – it was like the other time. I had to go back. I went down, through the wall of the tent and back into my body, and I woke up here, still sick.

One or another form of belief in reincarnation is to be found among a wide variety of hunting peoples throughout the world, the Australians representing one celebrated type. Although the intent of this paper is not comparative, it should be noted that there is considerable documentation for the distribution of reincarnation beliefs throughout eastern Siberia and northern North America. A far from exhaustive review of the literature indicates that reincarnation has been reported for the Yukaghir (Jochelson 1910), Chukchi (Bogoras 1904–10), Aleut (Veniaminov 1840: 126–7), Eskimo (Birket-Smith 1959: 163; Carpenter 1959; Marsh 1954: *inter alia*), Tlingit (Knapp and Childe 1896: 160; de Laguna 1954: 183–90; Krause 1985 [1956]: 192, citing Veniaminov and Heinrich Holmberg), Ojibwa (Hilger 1951; Hallowell 1955; Jenness 1935: 164), Upper Tanana (McKennan 1959: 160), and Kaska (Honigmann 1954: 137), as well as Kutchin (Osgood 1936: 140).

There is considerable variation in the forms reported, probably for two reasons: (1) variety and in some cases vagueness and attenuated nature of the concept; (2) lack of clarity on the part of some ethnographers on the usage of the term 'reincarnation.' The most discriminating discussion is Hallowell's for the Ojibwa. He distinguishes among *resurrection* (the coming to life again or reappearance in his own proper person of a deceased individual), *resuscitation* ('cases in which human intervention is said to have resulted in bringing the dead back to life' (1955: 154), *metempsychosis* (appearance of the deceased in the form of a non-human creature), and *reincarnation* (rebirth of a deceased person in a newborn child).

All of the types of concept distinguished by Hallowell have been features of the religion of the eastern Kutchin, traditionally hunters and fishers of the Western Canadian Subarctic. Several of the concepts have also existed among the Yukon Drainage Kutchin. The present discussion centres upon reincarnation among the Arctic Red River and Peel River

Kutchin, excluding from consideration the other kinds of revenance or spiritual rebirth, belief in which is also a feature of Kutchin culture. The present tense is used here not only in the historical or ethnographic sense, but because all of the concepts, with the possible exception of resurrection, have survived in contemporary Kutchin culture.

The Nature of Reincarnation

The Kutchin term for a reborn person or a reincarnation is *natli?*. The term refers at one and the same time to (1) the deceased person who has been reborn; (2) the more recently born person who now embodies the personality of the deceased; (3) the process or phenomenon of reincarnation. To a Kutchin there is no distinction between my senses (1) and (2), as they refer to one and the same personality. Sense (3) is distinguished morphologically in the Kutchin language, as the word *natli?* when used in the phenomenal sense belongs to a different noun class than when its referent is a person.

Reincarnation is a fairly rare phenomenon. Out of the present or recent eastern Kutchin population of about 650, I have been acquainted with 25 to 30 *natli?* in recent years. There are probably twice as many in actuality. In 1938–9 about one-tenth of the Peel River Kutchin were *natli?*.[2]

Most informants agree that reincarnation must occur within a year of the death – although there are exceptions to be noted. Usually at some time during the year, a pregnant woman will dream of the deceased. The first dream occurs when she feels the foetus move within her. At first she dreams of the deceased as a very small foetus; in repeated dreams, the deceased will appear larger each time. Just before parturition, the dead person will take the form of a small creature – some say a mouse – slip into the tent of the woman in labour, creep under her blanket, and enter her vagina.

When the child is born, it will be watched carefully for physical signs or mannerisms which can be interpreted as manifesting some resemblance to the subject of the dreaming. The child's first words are important; it may speak the name of the deceased or say something relative to him.

What Hallowell, writing of the Ojibwa, called 'precognition' (1955: 170) is the usual and most convincing sign of reincarnation. Here are some typical Kutchin examples.

When my daughter was carrying (pregnant with) Rebecca, she declared it was

her own dead elder sister. The baby girl certainly looked like my daughter who had died, but I did not think much of that because I supposed it was just family resemblance. But once, Rebecca said to her mother's brother, William: 'Before you were born, I was camped up the Rat River. A bunch of us girls used to play on swings.' It was true that we used to live up the Rat years ago, and that dead girl did play a lot on a swing (Mrs Julia Smith, Peel River, 1939).

Ben Kendi called me *sakikai* ('my DaHu'). Sure, he like me. We were good friends. After he died, Andrew Nersyoo was born. When he was four, he met me first time. Right away he said, 'Good morning, *sakikai*'. He like me a lot, too. Then he died ... Ben Kendi never came back any more (Roni Pascal, Peel River, 1966).

When he was five years old, my boy, Gilbert, pointed to a place we were passing and said, 'My Daddy kill a moose up there.' The year before Gilbert was born I did shoot a moose right there, and Wilfred was with me. He died about six months later (Edward Nazon, Arctic Red River, 1962).

Osgood, in a brief description of Peel River Kutchin reincarnation, states that 'the child is presumed to have omniscient knowledge of all his actions in the previous existence' (1936: 140). This is an overstatement in terms of my information; no such omniscience is expected.

For instance, Albert Johnson, the 'Mad Trapper of the Rat River,' dear to generations of journalists, who was hunted down by a posse in 1932 after he had killed a policeman and a special deputy, was reborn a year later as a Peel River female, now Mrs Ellen Gordon of Aklavik. Mrs Gordon is reputed to possess some special, albeit trivial, information once known only by Johnson. There is no claim, however, that she knows all that he knew. Indeed, not long ago, when Johnson was being discussed in her presence, 'Albert,' as Mrs Gordon is known to her friends, was interested to learn that Johnson had been a Swede. Her ignorance of this and of most other facts of Johnson's life by no means casts doubt upon the belief that she was his *natli?*.

Another locally celebrated and ill-fated White man, Inspector F.J. Fitzgerald, leader of the RNWMP (Royal North-West Mounted Police) patrol lost between Dawson and Fort McPherson in 1911, was also reborn as a Peel River woman. This lady not only claims no omniscience, but readily declares that she has forgotten most of the Fitzgerald memories that she possessed as a girl.

Three of the most knowledgable informants on the subject have stated that *natli?* manifest the tell-tale resemblances and prenatal memories

when they are children, the peak of coincidence occurring when the reborn person is between ten and twelve years of age. After that, these signs fade.

Relationship between Original Incarnation and Reincarnation

In earlier years, several informants claimed that a reincarnation always appeared as a person of sex opposite to that of the original incarnation and, where both the original and the rebirth were Kutchin, in a clan other than that of the original. The three matriclans are now obsolescent among the eastern Kutchin and are no more of a factor in reincarnation than in any other sociocultural process. As for sex or gender, among the forty-four cases known to me, the distribution is exactly even; that is, twenty-two reincarnations were in the same sex as the original, twenty-two in the other.

In considering the identity of those who, out of all others, happen to be reborn, two related questions arise: (1) what are the dynamics of choice, or what is the process of choice; and (2) what is the principle, if any can be discerned, upon which choice is based?

In addressing oneself to these questions, one must take care not to distort ethnographic reality by over-organizing and over-rationalizing it, on the ethnographer's terms. Ideas on reincarnation are often vague and mutually contradictory, not only as between individuals, but as entertained by a given individual at various times. It is by now a truism, as Fenton has remarked in discussing Iroquois religion, that 'ethnologists have demonstrated that societies often furnish mutually contradictory patterns for the individual to follow' (1941: 132).

For the Kutchin it cannot be said, as reported in some of the ethnographies cited earlier, that particularly good or particularly evil persons are those slated for reincarnation. It is also not true, as among some Inuit groups, that being named for a deceased induces a kind of reincarnation. When a Kutchin is discovered to be a *natli?*, he or she is named – or in modern times, nicknamed – for the earlier manifestation, but this is a *post hoc* action.

Several ethnographers of northern peoples have suggested that the reincarnated were those whose lives were cut short or unfulfilled in some way. For the Kutchin, this would be true of most *natli?*, but not all. Ben Kendi, mentioned earlier, lived a fairly long and full life. A band councillor of the Arctic Red River people is the *natli?* of his own grandfather, who died an octogenarian.

Of the reincarnations since 1900 on which I have fairly adequate information, the following characteristics have been noted. The earlier manifestation or original incarnation (e.g., Albert Johnson) is here termed the 'original.' The later-born person, or reincarnation (e.g., Mrs Ellen Gordon) is termed the 'rebirth.'

TABLE 1 Status of identified Peel River Kutchin reincarnation originals, 1900–70

	Number
I Incarnation linked by kinship or quasi-kinship	
(a) Sibling (including adopted sibling and cousin)	8
(b) Original a grandparent	2
(c) Secondary kin, members of same bilateral descent group.*	6 or 7
(d) Original a formal partner of a parent of the rebirth	2
II Original a local celebrity	
(a) Legendary or historic Kutchin of earlier times	4
(b) A chief of modern times	2
(c) A non-Kutchin who died in tragic or unusual circumstances:	12
(i) European or Euro-Canadian (7)	
(ii) Eskimo (1)	
(iii) Slave Indian (1)	
(iv) Japanese (2)	
(v) African Negro (1)	
(d) A remarkable person who left the area and the circumstances of whose death are unknown: one Kutchin, one Lapp, one American Negro	3
III. Residual category: Nothing distinctive known of the original, nor any close relationship to the rebirth.	4 or 5
Total	43–45

*The Kutchin bilateral descent group is a set of persons that appears to develop occasionally out of the 'local group' (Slobodin 1962: 54–7; Helm 1968: 118–25).

Repetitive Dreaming

The original incarnations represent a considerable range of personality type, ethnic group, age, kinship, and other status relationship to the rebirth. A common denominator is not easy to discern. However, there is at least one characteristic they all share: all were, or were said to have been, the subject of repeated dreaming on the part of a pregnant woman, the woman being the mother of the rebirth.

In a society wherein kinship remains a dominant organizing principle,

it is not unlikely that a close relative, especially one recently dead, will appear in one's dreams. In a community where gossip is a major preoccupation, and local stories are told and retold, an unusual person is also likely to play a part in dreams.

In three cases where the originals were local celebrities and where pertinent information was available, there were specific reasons why a particular woman should have dreamed about the celebrity in question. The mother of the reincarnation of Inspector Fitzgerald was married to one of the men who had helped to locate the bodies of Fitzgerald's lost patrol. The mother of the reincarnation of Albert Johnson is married to the only Kutchin on friendly terms with the reclusive and quarrelsome Johnson. The reincarnation of the Afro-American Black Tom was a granddaughter of Tom's occasional freighting partner, who had regaled his family with stories about this remarkable ex-slave (see Afterthoughts). Tom disappeared in 1888; his *natli?* was born about ten years later.

To suggest reasons why the image of a particular person should have appeared in the manifest content of a woman's dreams is not to explain why the dreams were repetitive; nor in itself does it explain the belief in reincarnation. As to the first problem, it may be noted that dreams, and the process of dreaming, have been and remain very important in Kutchin life. Dreams are a frequent subject of conversation, both in casual reference and in prolonged discussion. There are many formalized and traditional interpretations of dream images, and in addition, almost everyone improvises interpretations upon occasion. It is believed by many Kutchin that one can predetermine the nature of one's dreaming. It is possible, then, although I have no 'hard' evidence for it, that 'planned reincarnation' occurs sometimes among the Kutchin, although in a sense different from that described by de Laguna, who coined the phrase for the Tlingit (1954). Among the Tlingit, a person decides to become reincarnated, and arranges accordingly. Among Kutchin, it may be the mother of the rebirth who does the planning.

If one may believe Kutchin reports, repeated dreaming is a commonplace. Most such dreaming has nothing to do with reincarnation; it is simple wish-fulfillment or cautionary dreaming. I would guess that the reason more pregnant women do not have reincarnation dreams is that repetitive dreaming is something of a gamble for an expectant mother; it may prove advantageous to mother or unborn child, but it may prove to be a hazard. For example, if a pregnant woman dreams repeatedly about bears, her child may turn out to possess the sagacity or the

physical prowess of the bear; however, it may be excessively hairy, have a bear-claw birthmark, or turn out to be unapproachable and unsociable as an adult.

The fact is, as has been noted, that few rebirths closely resemble their originals in any significant qualities, but before their birth, there was always the chance that they might. This might be a good thing, but it might not.

Christianity and Reincarnation[3]

For over a century, eastern Kutchin have been subject to Christian missionary influence, which at times has been very powerful. Most people over the age of forty at Arctic Red River are devout Roman Catholics; their coevals at Fort McPherson are equally dedicated Anglicans; while some Kutchin living in the Mackenzie Delta towns of Aklavik and Inuvik have become Pentecostals. Younger people are, on the whole, fairly indifferent to religion, but have experienced a more formal Christian upbringing than have many of their contemporaries in urban centres to the south.

There is no place for the concept of reincarnation in the eschatology of any Christian sect or denomination. It may be worthwhile considering briefly why this is so, rather than taking it for granted, as the contrast may shed some light on the roots of Kutchin belief.

It was not always true that Christian doctrine presented a monolithic opposition to reincarnation. During the early centuries of the Christian era, when the central tenets of church doctrine were being hammered out in polemic, church councils, and religious wars, reincarnation in its various aspects, as distinguished by Hallowell (1955), was a marginal kind of belief, to which approaches may be found in the views of a minority of those Christian apologists whose writings have been preserved.

Primitive Christians developed a view of death in terms of resurrection of the body and the soul, a heritage of the central tenet of post-exile Judaic eschatology. 'That image, which was basically incompatible with the Platonic notion of immortality, competed for over a millennium with the image of immortality, and a theological *modus vivendi* was worked out in which, although the immortality of the soul was adopted as an axiom, the real locus of hope for mortal man was the resurrection of the body' (Gatch 1969: 162). It has often been noted that any argument in support of the immortality of the soul applies equally well to

pre-existence; and that, if the soul is pre-existent and immortal, it is unlikely that death should occur only once. Plato's cosmology includes reincarnation of the soul.[4] Some of the Christian Fathers, profoundly influenced by Platonic and Neo-Platonic ideas, were at the least troubled by the possibility of multiple rebirth, a possibility which seemed to them at variance with belief in individual judgment and redemption.

The Platonic view was given its most cogent and reasoned expression in the works of Origen (c. 186–c. 254 AD), generally regarded as the foremost Christian philosopher of his age. Origen's cosmology divides the world into spiritual and material realms, of which the former is good, the latter evil. The universe is populated by many rational, incorporeal spirits; insofar as these neglect their duty to and communion with God, they fall to lower levels and eventually assume corporeal form, 'harnessed to human flesh' (Danielou 1955: 218). Eventually the round of existence will come to an end and there will be a general return to a purely spiritual state; hell, or more precisely, purgatory, will be emptied, and all souls – even that of the Devil – will be saved.

Origen's teachings were condemned in church council, and although he died as a result of torture in a persecution of Christians, he was never granted official recognition as a martyr.

There appear to have been two principal reasons for rejection of these views as expressed by Origen and a number of other early Christian thinkers.

First, it could not be allowed that non-human animals, 'the brute creation,' possessed souls of the same nature as man's, whereas metempsychosis readily suggests the rebirth of the soul in non-human as well as in human form. 'For they must then, it was thought, have been provided for in a future state as well as our own,' it was pointed out in 1777 by Joseph Priestley, the chemist and Unitarian leader, in an ironical comment on the Christian doctrine of the soul.

Second, a more profound distinction: Christian cosmology is based upon a linear concept of the passage of time, a progression with no returning in any guise, a movement towards a goal. As far as I am aware, this is nowhere explicitly stated in Christian doctrine, but it pervades Christian, and hence Western, thinking. Reincarnation presupposes what may by contrast be called a circular or spiral conception of time.

Most Christians who are not professional students of religion with whom the question has been discussed are apt to say that there can be no place for reincarnation in Christian belief because it is incompatible

with individual responsibility and judgment, and with the continuing individual identity of the soul. This view was held by some of Origen's contemporary adversaries, for example, Tertullian. However, Plato and the Platonists managed to believe both in reincarnation and in divine judgment, for example, Plato in *Phaedrus* 248E–249D, *Phaedo* 82D–83C.

Far Eastern religions wherein reincarnation is a central tenet also encompass an eschatology of judgment, albeit quite different from that in Christian doctrine.[5] This brief comment on Christian attitudes toward reincarnation may highlight by contrast several features of the Kutchin religious attitude.

First, in Kutchin belief, non-human animals have souls, of much the same kind as human souls – although in some cases, more powerful. In addition, there is a special relationship between all Kutchin and all caribou; in mythical time they were of one kind, and ever since, in real time, the Kutchin share something of the caribou's soul or nature, and vice versa.

The Kutchin concept of time is more elusive; to do justice to it or, for that matter, to our own, would require more than a glib metaphor such as 'linear' or 'circular.' Discussion and documentation of these ideas would be well beyond the compass of this paper. I must content myself with stating that Kutchin ideas about the passage of time are quite different from those prevailing in our culture and that there appear to be several scales or tracks of time in which various entities and kinds of being operate.

It is also true, as is noted hereafter, that belief in Christian eschatology has not taken firm root among the eastern Kutchin.

Survival of the Concept

One of the most striking facts about Kutchin reincarnation is the vigorous survival of the concept. Despite official Christian opposition, all Kutchin I have known, and most northern Métis in addition, accept the reality of the kind of occasional reincarnation described in this paper. This belief is held by young and old, churchgoers, scoffers, and the indifferent. To say that they 'believe in' reincarnation is to suggest more zeal than is felt. Kutchin simply take the phenomenon for granted. Among the Kutchin who provided detailed information on the subject, clearly regarding it as a fact of life (and death), were three ordained Anglican priests, two Anglican catechists, a Pentecostal lay reader, a dozen of the most devout Roman Catholic and Anglican laity, two

notorious freethinkers, (analogues of the traditional 'village atheist' – one of these was Roman Catholic and the other of Anglican upbringing), and eight or ten young people living away from home in the Delta, who do not appear concerned with religious ideas.

Most of these informants have been told that reincarnation is a belief that conflicts with received Christian doctrine. This injunction has failed to shake the conviction of any. One of the Anglican clergymen reported that the late Archdeacon C.E. Whittaker, long-time missionary in the region, had inveighed against belief in reincarnation until one of his daughters, born at Fort McPherson, turned out to be a rebirth. This, it is said, converted the archdeacon. The truth of this tale is doubtful, to say the least, but it is a fact that several long-time White residents do subscribe to the Kutchin idea of reincarnation, having witnessed, so they say, remarkable instances of precognition in young children, including in some cases their own offspring.[6]

In most respects, pre-Christian Kutchin eschatology has long been obsolete. I know only one living eastern Kutchin who holds to the traditional belief that at death most of the people make a long, adventurous journey upriver, southward, to what might be described as a happy hunting ground. Most eastern Kutchin are firm in the conviction that at death they will go to the Christian heaven. However, they have been remarkably impervious to the concept of hell and of judgment and punishment in the hereafter.

Generations of Christian indoctrination have failed to change the Kutchin belief that after the rigours of this life, everyone merits a long and pleasant rest in heaven – everyone, that is, except those restless souls who make their way into the dreams of pregnant women.[7]

Afterthoughts – 1992

The 1970 paper was based upon observations made intermittently during the period 1938 through 1968. In recent years there has been opportunity to compare those observations with later reports and analyses of the kind represented in the present collection. Such comparison generates questions which did not arise earlier.

Interval between Death and Rebirth

One of these questions is the interval of time that was felt to have elapsed between the death of the original and the rebirth.

Table 2 summarizes this information as well as can be done at this rather late date.

TABLE 2 Interval in years between death of original and rebirth, 1900–70
(See Table I for definitions of Categories)

		up to				
	Total listed	1 year	3 years	10 years	More than 10 years	Information unavailable
I Kinship						
(a) Sibling	8	4	2		1	1
(b) Grandparent	2		1	1		
(c) Secondary	6 or 7	2	2	1		1 or 2
(d) Parent's partner	2		1			1
II Local celebrity						
(a) Hero of yore	4				4	
(b) Modern chief	2	2				
(c) Non-Kutchin who died in unusual circumstances	12					
(i) European			1*	2**	2	2
(ii) Inuk			1			
(iii) Slavey			1			
(iv) Japanese				1		1
(v) African		1				
(d) Remarkable person who left the area	3	1	1***			1
III Residual category	4 or 5	1	1			2 or 3
Totals	43–5	9	12	7	7	9–11

*Albert Johnson, the 'Mad Trapper.'
**Inspector F.J. Fitzgerald, RNWMP, is one of these.
***Black Tom (Slobodin 1989). He disappeared in 1888. His *natli?* was born in the early 1890s. As with most persons who have disappeared, it is not felt that Tom perished as soon as he was no longer traceable.

The Inuk was recognized in rebirth by several Inuit and by two White persons before the identity of the original was accepted, somewhat reluctantly, by Kutchin.

The Slave Indian was a riverboat deckhand who had drowned in the

MacKenzie River near the mouth of the Peel River. It was only when two kinsmen of his came downriver as deckhands a few years later that the rebirth was discovered. It was said that they had immediately recognized an Arctic River Kutchin boy as their relative reborn. The reincarnation then became accepted among Kutchin.

The Japanese were well known independent traders at lower MacKenzie posts. The African had apparently been a whaling-ship crew member who had settled in the Mackenzie Delta.

The reborn modern chiefs were Francis Charles, better known as Francis TsIk ('Slim'), Peel River band chief from 1897 until his death in 1905, and Julius Martin, Peel River chief from 1905 until his death in 1950. As of 1970 each had been reborn twice into the cognatic descent group from which all band chiefs had been chosen since Europeans first ascended the Peel in 1840, and probably well before that (Slobodin 1962: 71–2; 1969: 72–3). These rebirths might have been tabulated under 'Kinship.' In discussion, however, they seemed to be considered celebrity rebirths rather than kinship continuants. Of course they were both.

Incomplete though these data are, they include some interesting indications. As stated in the 1970 paper, most informants, both from the Peel River and the Arctic Red River bands, agreed that reincarnation 'must,' or at any rate does, occur within a year of the original's death. This was Kutchin ideology on the subject – or as some would put it, the folk model – conformable to that of other northern peoples. Yet of thirty-four rebirths where there is general agreement on the time interval between the death of the original and her/his return, only nine, or twenty-seven per cent, are felt to have occurred within one year. This is to be expected in view of the inclusion of historical or legendary personalities among the originals. It also conforms with a feature of eastern Kutchin culture not mentioned in the 1970 paper: the lively survival of myth, legend, and history. These three kinds of verbal heritage are intertwined; or rather, what are perceived by the outside observer to be three types of narrative are often, although not always, intermingled in Kutchin lore.

The most memorable White men reborn as eastern Kutchin were Inspector Francis J. Fitzgerald and the man known as Albert Johnson. In discussions of rebirth and of survival in the bush, the names of the two were often linked, although they perished a generation apart. Even the brief entries on them in the *Canadian Encyclopedia* suggest that they form a striking duality.

Inspector Francis J. Fitzgerald of the Royal North-West Mounted

Police was known in his time as a 'tough traveller,' high praise in the far north. Yet through hasty preparation and apparent overconfidence, he was lost with all his men in the winter of 1911 while undertaking a patrol between Dawson, Yukon, and Fort McPherson, NWT (Morrison 1988a: 787). This is an undoubtedly arduous trip of some 400 miles (670 km.) across the Cordilleras, yet it is one which in former years many Kutchin would mention making, 'perhaps as children or as nursing mothers' (Slobodin 1962: 15).

As for the 'Mad Trapper,' his shooting down a policeman who visited him to investigate a complaint is regarded by Kutchin as indeed the act of a madman. Yet with the passage of years he has come to be seen as a kind of hero, acquiring this status for his extraordinary skill, cunning, and endurance in eluding pursuit for weeks in the winter of 1932 before being found and killed.[8]

For those who fancy binary oppositions, comparison of Fitzgerald and Johnson is intriguing. One was a policeman who failed as a survivor; the other an anti-policeman and extraordinary survivor. Both were hunted down in the mountains west of the Mackenzie Valley by parties composed largely of eastern Kutchin men; Fitzgerald to be rescued or recovered, Johnson to be captured or killed. Rescue and capture in the bush are intertwined in Kutchin ideology (Slobodin 1960).

Black Tom was arguably the most remarkable non-Kutchin to be reborn into the community – in my view, the most remarkable outsider ever to sojourn among the people. Black Tom first appeared in Kutchin territory one spring in the late 1870s or the early 1880s, poling a raft on the Peel River. He reported to the Hudson's Bay Company post manager at Fort McPherson, saying that his name was Tom, that he had been a slave in the United States, and that he had been 'bent in putting as much distance as he could between himself and the land of his bondage. None of my fifteen or sixteen informants on Tom could recall his speaking of his past. However, many people had seen the welts and scars criss-crossing his broad back, badges of a recalcitrant slave and possibly a persistent escaper.

Black Tom worked part-time for the Hudson's Bay Company, as a packer and as a dog-driver, transporting furs and goods between Fort McPherson and its outposts on the Yukon side of the Cordillera. He stayed at various outposts or in the bush with the Kutchin, did a good deal of visiting and attended band feasts, at which he was an active dancer. He is also said to have led prayer meetings, leading the people in evangelical hymns. By all accounts he was immensely strong. When

not employed he spent time in reading the Bible he had managed to carry with him, or in meditation. When approached outdoors in summer, he might be seen sitting and rocking to and fro with eyes closed, tears running down his cheeks.

Black Tom disappeared in 1888. Kutchin tradition holds that Black Tom challenged the Earl of Lonsdale, when he stayed at Fort McPherson during his journey across the Canadian North and Alaska (Krech 1989), regarding upper-class British support of American slavery. It is said that Lonsdale invited Tom to travel with him to England where he would arrange an audience with the Queen. In the fall of 1888, Tom set out to cross to the Yukon valley and catch up with Lonsdale's party. He was never heard of again.[9]

On what basis Black Tom was said to be reborn as a Kutchin, I do not know. The reincarnate, whom I knew as an amiable and unexceptional woman, did not resemble Tom in any of his remarkable qualities. Nonetheless, the Kutchin felt confident that Black Tom, 'the only one [outsider] who never wanted anything from us,' as Chief Julius remarked, had been reborn as the granddaughter of Black Tom's freighting partner.

Secularization of Belief

Some features of Kutchin reincarnation belief raise questions more general than the time interval between death of the original and rebirth. These features seem to indicate that a process has taken place which sets Kutchin reincarnation belief apart in some respects from analogous cultural features discussed in this volume.

1 In 1938–9 I estimated that only one-tenth of the Peel River Kutchin population were rebirths. Of these, less than half were linked to their originals by clearly traceable kinship or quasi-kinship, although a distant genealogical connection may have existed in some cases. Fourteen of the forty-three to forty-five originals were not Kutchin. This inclusion of outsiders and especially non-Natives in rebirth cases is apparently rare among Amerindian and Inuit peoples.
2 All eastern Kutchin (Peel River, Arctic Red River, and Mackenzie Delta Kutchin) accepted reincarnation as a feature of existence. Some non-Kutchin, including Whites, appeared to accept some cases of alleged reincarnation.
3 Although universally accepted within the culture-bearing society,

> reincarnation did not involve very strong identification between original and revenant, nor was it taken very seriously by most people. It was my impression that only a minority, albeit a fairly sizable minority, of the community regarded the phenomenon of rebirth in a religious light. Among these were devout persons of whom a close relative had been reborn as a relative. One such was the late Mrs Elizabeth Blake, a valued friend and informant: 'She had a daughter who died aged nine in about 1931. Ruth, born a year later, was clearly *natli?* [a reincarnation] of her deceased sister ... When she was about six, Ruth told her mother that she had died [in 1931], had gone into the sky up a steep and very narrow trail, had been met at a beautiful big gate by a man in white who identified himself as St Peter. She had proceeded along a road and had seen a lot of the old people. Finally she came to a big crowd of people and angels, and there was Jesus. She was frightened, but she was taken up to Jesus, who spoke to her kindly and told her, "This is not the time for you." So she turned away and didn't remember anything else. Ruth was born a year later.' As Mrs Blake told of the encounter with Jesus, her voice became very reverent and low (Field notes, Fort McPherson, NWT, 3 August 1966).

To Mrs Blake, a devout Anglican and good Kutchin, every detail of the foregoing narrative was blended in religious conviction.

To most eastern Kutchin, however, perception of reincarnation seemed a casual matter. At first glance, the rebirth of non-Kutchin seems to deny or form an exception to the general view of reincarnation among tribal peoples as a form of group survival or at least as expressing the value of group survival. However, such denial is not necessarily the case. True, the persons in categories IIc and IId of the tables, with one exception, were not Kutchin. However, their stories were very much a part of modern eastern Kutchin tradition. These originals were, to use a sociological term, 'significant others.' When alive they – with the one exception – had been outsiders, but after their departure their memory became part of Kutchin lore. Black Tom would be a conspicuous example.

In some respects this development is similar to the creation of folk heroes in our own culture. Among Kutchin the process lacks media facilitation, but it gains from the intensity of interaction within a small and rather isolated community. The return in spirit of such local celebrities may be seen as serving to maintain and to reinforce community ideology.

Most cases of perceived rebirth lack detail and strength of connection between original and revenant. The connection, such as it is, tends to dissipate early in the life of the reborn. This, to be sure, is true in other Native American cultures. However, in the case of the Kutchin, the 'weakness' of the concept (Stevenson 1974: 371) is coupled with its universality.[10]

A majority of community members view reincarnation matter-of-factly; people occasionally joke about it. Yet hardly anything in eastern Kutchin mental culture is accepted by as high a proportion of the population as is the presence of reincarnates.

Matter-of-factness and universality suggest secularization, a shift from the religious towards the prosaic and everyday. Use of the term is intended to suggest that at one time Kutchin reincarnation belief was embedded in religious conviction, part of a system of faith, and that by 1970, for many Kutchin it had lost a great deal of its religious character and had become an article of group ideology. Such belief celebrated and symbolized the cohesion and continuance of the community.

In the conclusion of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James (1929 [1902]: 505) attempts to define religious belief as felt by that majority of persons who have not had a mystical or a conversion experience: 'confining ourselves to what is common and generic, we have in the fact that the conscious person is continuous with a wider self through which saving experiences come, a positive content of the religious experience.'

During the years I knew them best, a feeling of connection 'with a wider self' was evidenced not infrequently by Kutchin. To cite a small and quiet example, I recall having tea on the trail with a Kutchin companion one sunny winter afternoon. He asked me if I could hear anything. I replied, only the breeze in the branches and the rippling of the river. 'That's my old people talking to me,' he remarked. 'Telling me things are all right.' That, it seems to me, was a minor and reassuring religious experience. This feeling, I would maintain, is not to be found in most Kutchins' recognition of rebirth; although to a person such as Mrs Blake, her lost daughter's apparent rebirth was a religious event.

To clarify the present or recent position of Kutchin reincarnation belief, a partial analogy may be seen in the secularization of North American holidays originally religious and now largely civic. A case in point is Hallowe'en, the eve of Hallowmas or All Saints' Day. If Frazer is to be credited, it was established on the date of pre-Christian pastoral round-up time, especially the great Celtic fire festival of Samhain, which

was also the Celtic New Year, when the community's dead forebears returned for a visit (1913: 222ff). Although Hallowe'en as celebrated in North America is associated with ghosts as well as goblins and witches, it is doubtful if many people feel it as a religious occasion. Yet everyone is aware of Hallowe'en. There are obvious differences between the place of Hallowe'en as a largely secular event in our culture and the place of reincarnation as a partially secularized belief in Kutchin culture.[11] One is an annual festival; the other a continuous cultural feature. Moreover, Hallowe'en, like all festivals in our culture, is heavily commercialized. Nevertheless, there is an analogy between them as formerly features of religion, now weakly religious in overtone, not highly emotive, yet universal in their respective societies; although the secularization of Hallowe'en has gone much farther than that of Kutchin reincarnation belief.

Several questions remain. Is Kutchin reincarnation belief a decadent form? Why were there a significant proportion of non-Kutchin among the reincarnated personalities? Why do, or did, a noticeable number of non-Kutchin share the belief?

These kinds of questions must be examined diachronically, in terms of the total culture and the changes it has undergone during the past century and a half. They must be part of historical or developmental inquiry, a task for another place.

Notes

1 Originally published in the *Western Journal of Anthropology*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1970. Slightly revised. Since the original publication there has been an organized movement to promote the ethnic name 'Gwich'in,' which is more nearly correct than 'Kutchin' (Ritter 1976). 'Kutchin' has, at least for the present, been established in the literature.

2 This estimate is based upon consensus and identification of revenants. However, Lucy Martin and another octogenarian woman stated that everyone must be reincarnated at least once.

3 For the section on Christianity and reincarnation I wish to acknowledge the research and useful comments of Ms Margaret Rees, graduate student in anthropology, and enlightening discussion with the Reverend Dr Peter Hordern and Dr Edward P. Sanders, both then in the Department of Religious Studies, McMaster University. As of 1992, Dr Hordern is at Brandon University and Dr Sanders at Duke University.

4 Especially in the *Phaedo* and the *Phaedrus*, but also in the *Laws*, *Republic*,

and *Timaeus*. *Phaedrus* 249 contains a beautiful description of the destiny of souls, wherein the philosopher or lover of wisdom may escape the wheel of rebirth in three thousand years, a much shorter time than is possible for souls less attuned to truth. These assertions are based in part upon Plato's doctrine of Forms, and upon his (or Socrates') argument for the immortality of souls. He says he does not suppose he is describing exactly what happens – his myth is metaphorical – but he does assert that something like this must surely be the case.

5 In the history of the Christian Church there was, it would seem, an additional reason for the hardening of opposition to reincarnation belief. This was the fact that in various forms, the belief was a feature of the Manichean heresies which involved the Church in violent struggles during many centuries (see, for example, Runciman 1961: 168–87). This historical factor, however, played no direct part in Kutchin-missionary relations.

6 Consider the diffusion of 'bush man' belief in former years to long-term White residents (Slobodin 1960). Few immigrants to the region during the past twenty years (1950–70) have been aware of this or any other feature of Kutchin mental culture.

7 In 1966 I was in conversation with a reputed *revenante*. Joan (not her real name) had a Peel River Kutchin mother and an Irish father; she was regarded as the rebirth of a maternal aunt. I had known her as a charming and beautiful girl.

We met again in the town of Whitehorse, Yukon, when Joan was in her thirties. She had been twice married and divorced and was supporting three children by working in a laundry. Still attractive and amiable, she had pretty clearly been through quite a lot.

After catching up on the highlights of her life since we had last met, I asked Joan if she expected to be reborn again. She laughed, saying, 'No thanks! Once is enough.'

8 In the Ogilvie Mountains, that section of the Cordilleras westward of the lower Mackenzie, Johnson evaded capture by a posse 'in a chase [that] lasted 48 days and covered 280 km. in temperatures averaging minus 40 degrees C ... Johnson was so skilled at survival that the police had to employ bush pilot "Wop" May to track him' (Morrison 1988b: 1113). Local people also point out that Johnson carried minimal provisions and was unable to light a fire for much of the time. He was eventually brought down, but not before he had killed another policeman and grievously wounded a special deputy.

I do not believe that Johnson has gained a place in local lore because he defied authority and killed agents of governmental control. He is not, or

as of 1970 was not, a symbol of resistance in any political sense. After all, he was a White man. It was, rather, his ability to survive under extremely adverse conditions that has given him a place in folk memory; in this respect he resembles certain heroes of traditional tales, such as the war leader called 'Without Fire' (Slobodin 1975).

9 As far as I have discovered to date, Black Tom has completely escaped the written record, including mention in Lonsdale's travel journal (Krech 1989). Tom was not the only escaped slave or ex-slave to reach the far north of North America, but he probably travelled farther than any other. Some of the stories told in Kutchin country concerning this remarkable Afro-American are related in Slobodin (1989).

10 'Weakness' is derived from Stevenson's usage of 'weak' (1974: 371 and elsewhere), with the distinction that Stevenson is discussing individual cases and evidence suggestive of the actuality of reincarnation.

11 An account of this festival as still markedly religious yet partially secularized is given in Badone's vivid description of the contemporary Breton celebration of Toussaint, All Saints' Day (1989: 258–77). 'A young woman from a Communist family points out: "It's religious, but it's also a custom"' (ibid.: 277).

JEAN-GUY A. GOULET

10 Reincarnation as a Fact of Life among Contemporary Dene Tha

ABSTRACT. Anthropologists have documented various aspects of Dene or Northern Athapaskan representations of self as reincarnated individuals. This paper examines Northern Athapaskan knowledge concerning reincarnation as a 'fact of life' among the Dene Tha of northwestern Alberta. Applications of this knowledge in the context of modern-day use of contraception and sterilization are considered, and a discussion of issues pertaining to anthropological investigations of accounts of reincarnation leads to suggestions for further interdisciplinary research. The essay is based on fieldwork that extended from January through June for five consecutive years (January 1980 to July 1984), with regular annual shorter visits since.

Spiro (1987: 33–5) suggests we look at a culture as a set of propositions, however implicit, descriptive and normative, about nature, man, and society. Individuals born in a society come to think of culturally constituted knowledge as 'facts of life.' In numerous American Indian societies, the proposition that 'someone is coming back to be born again' describes what is known to be the norm, namely that many, if not all, individuals are eventually reincarnated.

In 1876 Emile Petitot, OMI, reported that, while among the Dene, he tried in vain to dispel a young woman's opinion that she had lived an earlier life under another name and other appearances, and failed equally in his attempts to discredit a grandmother's conviction that she should claim the child of a neighbour as her own, a child she 'knew' to be her own son reincarnated.[1] Were he to visit Chateh today Petitot might be inclined to try again to discredit the Dene conviction that some, but not all souls of deceased individuals are born again. I believe

his efforts would be equally fruitless. In Chateh, a dreamer, a parent-to-be, or a relative of a child yet to be born, very often foresees the reincarnation and foretells it. Souls of deceased individuals seeking to be born again are often sighted around the burial ground or seen at night around people's homes. For instance in June 1983, speaking of her recently deceased brother, a woman told me: 'He has been to our house and wants to be a baby again. He came at night and around the school too he was seen.' In January 1984, returning to Chateh after an absence of six months, I was told of the fact that 'right now there are lots of people going around who want to be reincarnated.

Time after time Dene Tha told me that the soul of the individual they raise as a reincarnated relative is also present in heaven. Dene Tha prayed to a relative they thought of in heaven when in need of assistance in stressful and difficult situations, and maintained that this same relative had returned to them to 'be made again' and was raised by them as a child (Goulet 1988: 12–13). My own difficulty in accepting the Dene Tha proposition that a deceased person could be in two places, in the 'other land' and in 'this land' as someone reincarnated was beyond the understanding of my informants. When confronted with my persistent questioning of his statement to this effect, one informant grabbed the lid of a coffee jar and placed it next to me, telling me: 'Take it!' As I reached out to pick up the lid, he quickly retrieved it with his heavy, strong hand. He looked at me and said, 'See, you can't take it, you would have to fight me.' Removing his hand from the lid, he instructed me again to pick it up, which, this time, he let me do. He then added, 'See, you can take it. I tell you everything. We teach you, we say everything to you' (field notes, verbatim: 27 April 1983). What he and others were teaching me were facts of life, propositions that the Dene Tha hold as normative about themselves and their place in the wider scheme of things. These propositions were not to be questioned or doubted, for they were the basis for living a normal life and communicating within this world as conceived by the Dene Tha (Watson and Goulet 1992).

My intention in this paper is therefore twofold. My first intent is to examine aspects of Dene Tha knowledge concerning reincarnation as a fact of life, including applications of this knowledge in the context of modern-day use of contraception and sterilization. To date the ethnographic record contains no explicit discussion of the impact of modern-day contraception and sterilization on traditional Northern Athapaskan conceptualization of human reproduction. My second intent is to dis-

cuss methodological issues pertaining to anthropological and interdisciplinary investigations of accounts of reincarnation.

Reincarnation Belief in Contemporary Dene Tha Life and World-view

Perhaps I should begin by establishing the fact that the Dene Tha are not now an exotic folk, far removed from the modern world. The Dene Tha contemporary lifestyle is modern in more ways than one, and the description by Asch (1981; 1984: 14–27) of the changes in Slavey lifestyle over the past two centuries applies thoroughly to the Dene Tha of Chateh in northwestern Alberta. In the anthropological literature people of this community are referred to either as Slavey (Asch 1981: 348) or as 'the Dene Tha branch of the Beaver Indians' (J.G.E. Smith 1987: 444).[2] Dene Tha people are now settled on a reservation and live in permanent houses serviced with electricity. Cars and trucks, motorboats, and skidoos, have almost totally displaced the horse wagon, canoe, and dog-sleigh. The primary social unit is no longer the band, but the household, typically consisting of at least three generations of family members living under one roof. Since 1945 the introduction by the Canadian government of the family allowance, old-age pension benefits, and social welfare has provided major sources of cash income to the local economy. Many adults earn wages in and out of the locality through part-time work, while others still derive the whole of their income from trapping. All families rely on store-bought food to supplement the big game, fowl, and fish harvested by men, and small game, fish, and berries harvested by women, to provide their households and those of close relatives with food from the land. Children attend public schools and learn to speak English fluently, although they speak their native tongue in the school playground. English is very seldom heard in Dene Tha homes, except for the omnipresent voice of the television. People identify themselves as Roman Catholics, having been subjected to intense missionary activity beginning in the late nineteenth century, but they continue to shape their lives according to a distinctive Northern Athapaskan religious tradition (Goulet 1982, 1988, 1992). The people of Chateh live their lives according to a distinct 'set of propositions, however implicit, descriptive and normative, about nature, man and society' (Spiro 1987: 35).

In Chateh the people take it for granted that human beings live either on this land ('our land,' *ndahdigeh*), or in 'the other land,' (*ech'úndigeh*,

also referred to as *yake*, 'heaven,' and *Ndahxota digeh*, 'God's land'). To them, communication through dreams and visions between the human beings living in 'our land' and the deceased living in the 'other land' is possible and normal. An individual who develops the ability to travel to and from the 'other land' through dreams and visions, is known as 'preacher,' 'prophet,' or 'dreamer' in English and as *ndatin* (from the verb *ndate*, 'to dream') in the local dialect. In 'our land,' animals found in the bush are material representations of spirit animal forms of life, and they may become someone's animal helper. Until very recently almost everyone in Chateh experienced, before the onset of adolescence, an encounter with an animal that became that person's power or 'helper.' Today, some parents still encourage their young children to spend time wandering in the bush in the hope that they will come back with an animal helper. People 'describe a vision as *mendayeh wodekeh*, "something appearing in front of someone," or *mba'awodi*, "something talking to or sounding for someone."' (Moore and Wheelock 1990: 59). Because a vision often comes hand in hand with a song, a young person who is sent to seek a vision 'is often told, *Shin kaneya* "Go for a song!"' (ibid.).

The person who encounters an animal while on his vision quest is known as *Dene wonlin edadihi*, 'a person who knows an animal.' The knowledge of an animal is usually accompanied by a gift or a power to heal a specific illness. Dene Tha elders teach that the power obtained from an animal is but a feeble reflection of the animal's original powers: 'People may think that they know about animals, but it isn't true; a human's powers are insignificant. We are people; we know only a little about animals and their ways. Animals have special abilities which they depend upon to live, giving us only the powers which they no longer need. They hold fast to their secrets until they are used up, and then they throw them away. An animal chooses someone to receive these leftover powers, a person who has treated the animals with respect' [a Dene Tha Elder, in Moore and Wheelock 1990: 7]. In the Dene Tha view individuals who treat animals with respect receive power, however diminished from its original state, and with this power one's life is enhanced.

One 'knows an animal' and receives a 'song' and 'power' through one's personal and private encounter with an animal. Dene Tha insist that the curious, fellow Dene or anthropologist, may not intrude on the encounter between child and animal: 'if you are in the bush and the

animal is talking to you or coming to you and someone comes your way, then the animal disappears.' In a sense, this encounter must remain private: 'When they [the children] come back [from the bush] they are not supposed to tell you; if they do their power just goes away,' confided one informant. It is thus common knowledge among the Dene Tha, as among other Northern Athapaskans, that to discuss openly and publicly their animal helper is to court danger, because their animal helper is likely to turn away from them, or even against them, if they do so (Mills 1986: 84; Rushforth 1986: 253; Ridington 1988: 60; Moore and Wheelock 1990: xviii).

Dene Tha, like other Northern Athapaskans, nevertheless learn the identity of each other's animal helpers on the basis of indirect evidence and/or third parties. To begin with, everyone knows that fellow Dene Tha must avoid certain foods, sounds, and sights, because they know an animal. As one informant put it: 'if you have a power you do not eat that kind because it can kill a person.' A person who has the eagle as animal helper cannot be exposed to the flash of a camera, which is likened to the glare of the eagle's eye (Ridington 1990: 167–8; Goulet 1982: 8–9). A person whose animal helper is the spider cannot listen to the sound of guitar or violin strings being plucked (Mills 1986). Should one defy these prohibitions one's power would become too strong and turn against oneself. This much is general knowledge. In each case Dene Tha must infer from one's behaviour the exact nature of what is to be avoided, and hence infer the identity of one's animal helper. It is through one's behaviour that one reveals the identity of the animal helper and thus bridges the gap between the private world of a vision and the public world of social interaction.

In the light of these facts of life, relationships between spouses and in-laws may be fraught with danger, because individuals who now share in commensality do not know precisely about each other's powers and of the associated prescribed avoidances (Watson and Goulet 1992: 225). Early in their marriage a woman found out the identity of her husband's animal helper in the following way. She and her husband were approaching her mother's house when he suddenly said he did not want to go into the house. When she insisted that they should proceed with their intended visit, his body began to shake and he threw up. She immediately walked him back home, where he told her that he had smelled ptarmigan in the house. She immediately understood that ptarmigan was his power. She indeed soon found out the cause of her husband's reactions. Her brother had killed many ptarmigans which

were being cooked when they had approached her mother's house. Her husband had picked up the smell and had immediately shown signs of distress at being exposed to his animal power as food. The mother was asked to get rid of the ptarmigan, which was done. Henceforth ptarmigan ceased being part of the household's menu. As an important aspect of the identity of the man who knew ptarmigan became known to his spouse and in-laws, they modified their hunting and eating behaviour accordingly in order to incorporate him into their circle.

The knowledge of an animal usually also gives one the ability to affect to some degree the behaviour of other spiritual beings – the souls of living and deceased individuals – and the animal helpers of fellow Dene.[3] The soul of an individual who dies may seek on its own to enter the womb of a woman and be born again in 'this land,' rather than journey to the 'other land.' The soul of an individual who dies may also be born again in 'our land,' not out of his or her desire, but because of a decision made by the parents or relatives, who call on fellow Dene to use their animal helpers and powers to bring someone's soul back to this land (Goulet 1988: 8). Thus among the Dene Tha reincarnation is linked to the private, quasi-hidden realm of dreams and vision quest, while reincarnation itself is a public, openly recognized and discussed 'fact of life.'

Reincarnation and the Identification of Those Made Again

In their discussion of individuals dying and being born again, Dene Tha speakers very seldom use the expression reincarnation. They use phrases such as 'he or she was done to us again' or 'he or she was done again.' This English phraseology is very close to the Dene phrase denoting such a person: *Dene andats'indla*, 'a person who was made again by others.'[4] A total of forty-one accounts of reincarnation have come to my attention among the Dene Tha to date. Of these eighteen (forty-four per cent) are cases of cross-sex reincarnation.[5] Three cases are discussed in earlier publications, one case in Goulet (1982: 9–10) and also (1988: 10–11) and two other cases in Goulet (1988: 8–9). Three other accounts of cross-sex reincarnation are discussed in this paper for the first time.

Any Dene Tha account of a case of reincarnation is likely to include a combination of several of the following indicators:

1 Annunciatory dreams that tell a mother to be, or a father to be, or a close relative of her or him, that someone is about to reincarnate:

'I dreamed about Josie just like in person. I could hear that foot, foot, you know (with her hand on the table, the speaker makes the movement and the sound of footsteps.) She was carrying a paper, like this. (Speaker rolls a TV Guide in her hands.) When I was dreaming, looking at Josie, first thing when I see her, I say "She is gone. How come she came back?" First time she asks, "Where's Tom?" He was sleeping in the next room. "I'd like to see Tom and June," she said. I was surprised, scared. She said, "No, I will not do nothing. I just want to see them again." The next day, June was just screaming, shaking. She was out of her bed. She was so pale. Didn't say nothing. She drank cold juice, and milk. She said "I just dreamed Josie was coming back to me. That is why she is coming back back to me." That same month she was going to have a baby [became pregnant]. And that's her little girl (speaker points to child seen as reincarnation of Josie)' (field notes, verbatim: 19 February 1984. In this account, as in all others, names of individuals are fictive).

2 Visions of a dead person roaming about public places or private homes in the hope of entering a woman's body to be reincarnated:
'My daughter, she is my uncle (FB).
There is always somebody who knows who it is going to be.
They see the spirit going into you.
My dad saw me standing in a field,
and my [deceased] uncle was walking towards me.
When he got to me, he disappeared.
Then he [my father] knew it was going to be a reincarnation'
(field notes, verbatim: 07 May 1982).

3 Waking recollections from past lives:
'One time she (pointing to her daughter seen as the reincarnation of her uncle) said to me:
"I had lots of money and lost it all. Money is really not important."
Her uncle was a rich man. He had lots of money when he died.
She says things like that' (field notes, verbatim: 12 May 1982).

4 Similarities of personality between a reincarnated person and those of the previous reincarnation:
'It is just the spirit that comes back, all the traits,
my uncle was stubborn, quick tempered, so is [my daughter].
My dad told her who she is:
"you used to be my brother, my brother
and we used to always fight when we were drinking"'
(field notes, verbatim: 07 May 1982).

'She sits quiet, just like Josie. She likes music,
and as soon as he hears it she dances.
The girl [Josie] was the same. Liked to have fun'
(field notes, verbatim: 19 February 1984).

Birthmarks that somehow relate to a previous incarnation:

'That Vivian, she is Jacob's brother [Dwight].
Over two years, he kept coming to my place. I dream about him.
A year later, my child was born. Then Vivian [his child] came.
She had a dark spot here, like that guy (shows where on the body).
When we were kids we lived at Zama, [my brother] had a dog really mean.
From up onto a wagon box, he [Dwight] fell down and got bitten by the dog.
He had a scar here (points to body part, where his daughter has a birthmark)'
(field notes, verbatim 27 May 1982).

Dene Tha accounts of cases of reincarnation indicate that the identification of someone as being a particular person reincarnated is sometimes a gradual process. In some cases one crucial event is remembered as the final evidence that an earlier identification was correct. Consider the following example. Beverley, the woman who gave birth to her father's brother, also gave birth to one of her father's hunting partners. Her father had dreams of his deceased partner, and he suspected this man might soon be born again to his pregnant daughter. The child had reached the stage when it was grasping things and bringing them to her mouth; one day, it began to cry and could not be consoled by anyone in the household. Many objects were offered to the child, who simply kept crying. The baby's grandfather then said, 'try to give her an onion.' The mother gave the child an onion, and the child, she said, 'grabs it and ... eats it. She is really happy' (field notes, verbatim: 07 May 1982).

According to my informant, except for the baby's grandfather, everyone in the family was surprised at this ending to an unusual spell of crying. The grandfather had had a dream of his hunting friend wandering around his house, but he had kept the dream to himself. Soon thereafter his daughter had become pregnant. Hence, his suggestion that the child be given an onion, as the deceased hunting partner was known for his pronounced taste for onions. After the child ate the onion, the man told the family that the baby was his hunting partner.

The family, as indeed myself, doubt any other child in the community would have grasped an onion and eaten it so eagerly. The fact that this child did precisely that is interpreted as evidence that a hunting partner is back and alive, growing among them as a young girl.

Earlier it was shown how a man concluded a reincarnation was about to take place as 'he saw' his deceased brother walk up to his daughter standing in a field. The child later demonstrated the psychological trait of stubbornness that was reminiscent of the deceased brother. As the child grew the man told her who she was: 'you [my granddaughter] are my brother.' Recollections of past activities and past interactions became part of the child's socialization, and she came to know herself, as others know her. Similarly, the grandmother who constantly greets her grandson with the exclamation *Aa, tsido ndadlinhi,* 'Aa, the child who is made again,' sets the stage for others to engage in recollections of events allegedly lived by the child in an earlier life. These recollections become part of the child's own sense of identity. Such accounts of reincarnation suggest a fascinating field of investigation, the observation of adults teaching a child knowledge that is culturally defined as recollections of a past life. Sustained and intimate contact with Native families are the necessary conditions for this kind of investigation.

Reincarnation and Sexual Reproduction

In Chateh the process of reincarnation and the process of human reproduction are intimately linked. The Dene Tha appear to see sexual intercourse as a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for human reproduction. Informants often pointed out that a sexually active couple may remain without a child a few years before they conceive, and that conception often occurs after the wife or husband 'sees' a deceased relative coming back to them to be born again. Dene Tha also recognize that in the past twenty years a significant number of women have been sterilized. It is alleged that in some cases this has been done without their full informed consent. This new fact of life has had a profound impact on the lives of Dene Tha males and females, living and deceased. The cycle of reincarnation can only continue through fertile women, and, apparently, these women are now more likely to be young adolescents. In two of the cases described below, Dene Tha express the view that sexually active teenagers become pregnant because of all the people going around to be reincarnated when no other female is available to go back to in order to be born again. In other words, Dene Tha

attribute some teenage pregnancies to the relative scarcity of fertile women whom spirits might enter to be reborn.

The first case is that of Luke, the son of Andrew's brother, who is coming back to Andrew's daughter (Luke's father's brother's daughter) to be born again. The case is told by Andrew's sister-in-law, Julie, who is also the reincarnated baby's mother's mother's sister.

> Andrew's brother, his boy died.
> Not long after I went to visit [my sister] Susan [Andrew's wife].
> Andrew started to talk about this little boy [his deceased brother's son], and Andrew was crying like a baby. He said:
> 'Why nowadays do these women have to use birth control. I've see Luke [his deceased brother's son] standing at a corner of the house.
> He had no place to go.
> He had no choice but to come to my house,
> that is how my girl is pregnant.'
> Beverly [Andrew's daughter; Julie's sister's daughter] had a boy [Luke, reincarnated]
> (field notes, verbatim: 3 June 1982).

On a separate occasion I heard a similar account of a man crying as he told of his pregnant teenage daughter. The man stated the deceased relative had no choice but to come to his daughter as too many other women of child-bearing age were not available to come back to because they had been sterilized.

When young adolescents are attracted to each other and begin sleeping with each other in the home of either partner, some parents – including the informant quoted above – do not interfere with their child's preferences and activities. Whether permissiveness is new or not is an open question. This permissiveness towards adolescent sexual activity takes on an added meaning, in the light of the parents' desire to have their deceased relative 'be made again,' and the parents' knowledge that fewer and fewer individuals in their generation can actually bring someone back to this land. The question remains, what do the tears of fathers represent? Sorrow at the thought they themselves will not father more children through their wives? Guilt at seeing their daughters visited by deceased relatives who would have preferred to be made again in the wombs of the preceding generation of women? Or some other motive which Dene Tha are aware of and that I have not identified in the course of fieldwork?[6]

Validity of Claims of Reincarnation?

Most anthropologists would agree with the view that the anthropologist 'is not concerned with the possible truth or falsehood of particular beliefs, but with the existence and significance of those beliefs' (Malefijt 1989: 4). Thus, the concern with the possible truth of the widespread belief in reincarnation is generally not considered appropriate within the profession. A different view is taken by Antonia Mills, who states that even though 'the discipline is not accustomed to carefully and critically examining the evidence that a particular belief is justified,' the conviction of people 'that a thought component of an individual can survive death and be born again deserves continued thorough and scientific investigation' (1988b: 409–10). Mills argues correctly that 'a culturally vested interest in identifying children as reincarnations of deceased relatives does not preclude the possibility that such a process is actually taking place' (1988b: 409). In a supporting comment Bock (1988: 445) writes that to consider this line of investigation 'we must attend to experiences and data that contradict our conventional assumptions' or 'do not fit with "mainstream" notions of how the world works.'

Can it be established according to scientific criteria that a process such as reincarnation is actually taking place? A thorough scientific investigation of 'cases of reincarnation' must assess the facts that Natives submit as evidence for their recognition of a child as someone reincarnated, and also examine other facts that are not part of the Native explanation of physical and psychological features found in a child who is seen as the reincarnation of a previous personality. In the discussion to follow I will focus first on birthmarks that somehow correspond to wounds, scars, or lesions on a deceased individual of whom the child is thought to be the reincarnation, and second, on accounts of statements on the part of children, statements that are locally thought of as instances of recollections of past lives. Both classes of phenomena are thought to represent the most compelling evidence in favour of the notion that reincarnation might be taking place.

Birthmarks as Evidence of Reincarnation?

The ethnographic record contains many cases of striking correspondence between birthmarks on a newborn and wounds, scars, or lesions on a deceased individual. Cases of birthmarks on a child apparently corresponding to scars or lesions that existed on the body of the individual

the child is seen to reincarnate are widespread; they are found in Native North America, as well as in India, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Lebanon, Nigeria, Thailand, and Burma. For instance, marking practices on cadavers to monitor reincarnation are reported for the Assam-Burma region of Southeast Asia (Parry 1932) and for Thailand (Edelstein and Stevenson 1983). In Senegal Edelstein (1986: 80) met 'three adults with small pieces of the rim of their ears missing' and heard from other relatives the claim that they had 'witnessed the marking of an earlier cadaver in the same way.' The marking on the ears of cadavers was recognized as a means to monitor reincarnation. Individuals born with a part of their ear missing were seen as the reincarnation of their predecessor whose ear had been marked at the time of their burial. In the ethnographic record, most cases of birthmarks suggestive of reincarnation are not the result of such practices; rather, as reported for the Dene Tha, birthmarks and birth defects are seen to correspond to wounds, lesions, and scars on a reported deceased individual.

The case had been reported of a Dene Tha boy born with a tuft of very conspicuous black hair, at least an inch long, standing out on a head otherwise covered with thinly spaced baby hair, much shorter, and of a much lighter colour. The tuft of black hair stood where the presumed previous personality had been fatally wounded (Goulet 1988: 10). In another instance a man showed Goulet a birthmark, a two-inch-long line across the abdomen, as evidence that he was a relative reincarnated, a relative who had borne such a mark in exactly the same place. Another man saw in his daughter's birthmarks, near the ear and on the wrist, evidence that she was indeed a relative born again, a relative who had scars in these very same places as a result of having been bitten by a dog. From her field notes among the Wet'suwet'en, Mills (1988a: 5) reports the case of a girl 'born with a double birth mark on her back which corresponds to the location where the presumed previous personality was stabbed by scissors.' Two Beaver Indian cases involve individuals who while alive had expressed a clear preference for their parents-to-be when they would reincarnate after their deaths. These two individuals died, and when the designated parents-to-be gave birth to children, it was no surprise to the Beaver Indians to note that in both cases the babies were 'born with birthmarks corresponding to scars on the previous personality' (Mills 1988b: 399).

Assuming for the moment that the shape and location of birthmarks in a child correspond to the shape and location of wounds or lesions on the reported previous personality, how are we to account for this correspon-

dence? Genetic factors cannot be ruled out, and in such cases Stevenson and his co-investigators attempt to determine if members of a family tend to inherit similar birthmarks. In the absence of evidence of genetic inheritance should we entertain the notion that such birthmarks then 'represent the most compelling evidence that previous life experiences can have an enduring impact on the body of the returning person' (Mills 1988b: 409)? In other words, could it be empirically determined that there are 'ways in which a disincarnate personality might influence the physical body of the next incarnation' (Stevenson 1987: 249)?[7]

Assuming again that a scientific investigation could establish the influence of a psychic factor in determining the form and sometimes the pigmentation of somatic cells and tissue in a foetus, this determination would still fall short of establishing that a process like reincarnation is actually taking place. How could one ever identify whose psyche is at work? Would it be the psyche of the mother, of close relatives, or of friends of the dead person, or even of the disincarnate personality, if one admits of this possibility? Or could it be a combination of these individuals' thoughts and wishes, conscious and unconscious, that influences the formation of bodily cells and tissue in a foetus?[8] Edelstein (1986: 88), a geneticist, reminds us that in such areas as concern us here,' conclusions are never as certain as for the structure of a helix or the sequence of bases in DNA, and definitive conclusions may never be achieved.' The compelling evidence that previous life experiences have an enduring impact on the body of a child, seen as someone reincarnated, may be impossible to determine.

Memories of a Past Life as Evidence of Reincarnation?

In her discussion of waking recollections of a previous life among Beaver, Gitksan, and Wet'suwet'en, Mills noted that as reincarnated subjects are typically said to be reborn into the same family, 'there is a greater possibility that the statements the child does make [concerning a previous life] may in fact be based on information he or she has learned from people in his or her environment' (1988b: 386). The circumstances then suggest that the alleged recollections of past lives may be no more than the result of 'normal knowledge rather than the result of something like reincarnation' (1988b: 409). This is the point of view I have taken in the presentation of Dene Tha accounts of cases of reincarnation. Such cases, writes Mills, 'are therefore not the best suited to evaluate the existence of reincarnation' (1988b: 386).

In their discussion of accounts of reincarnation Stevenson and Samararatne (1988) also recognize that members of a culture in which reincarnation is considered a fact of life may credit a child with knowledge of a previous life while ignoring their role in consciously or unconsciously feeding this knowledge to the child through normal means of communication. In such cases they cannot rule out 'the plausibility of the sociopsychological interpretation' (1988: 237). This hypothesis is also applicable to children who exhibit phobias and philias unusual in their families but that accord with behaviour of the person whom the child is thought to reincarnate. According to Stevenson and Samararatne (1988: 218), 'such behaviour could derive from the child's belief that he had been a particular person,' a belief that 'by itself is not evidence that the subject had a previous life.'

Stevenson and his co-investigators have sought cases that would be better suited for the purpose of determining if a process like reincarnation actually takes place, cases in which the competing interpretation could not apply (Chari 1962, 1987; Brody 1979). Stevenson and his co-investigators think they have found such cases in Sri Lanka where children are reported to declare they had a previous life and make statements about their previous incarnation without coaching on the part of parents and relatives. In such cases parents and relative often locate a family, even a geographically distant one, that confirms the child's view of being someone reincarnated. Families are 'impelled to do this by their own curiosity, by the child's strongly expressed wish to go to the other family, or for both reasons' (Stevenson and Samaratne 1988: 218).

Impelled by their own research interests, outsiders can do the same. In a number of instances, Mr Tissa Jayawardane, Stevenson's research assistant in Sri Lanka, 'reached the scene of the case before the families had met, made a written record of the subject's statements and then went on to identify a family corresponding to the statements (which family the subject's family had not met or heard about)' (Stevenson and Samararatne 1988: 219–20). The identification of a deceased person whose life and death correspond to the subject's statements follows an elaborate process through which investigators reject a subject's small number of erroneous statements (Stevenson and Samararatne 1988: 222, 227, 233), set aside a greater number of statements that cannot be confirmed or found to be incorrect, and then apply the larger number of remaining statements of general applicability to a specific case of a dead person whose life corresponds with the child's statement in only one or two specific statements

(Stevenson and Samararatne 1988: 225, 229, 235).[9] In one case, except for the mention by the child that she had a sister in a previous life, all of the other statements taken one by one 'could apply to a number of families' (Stevenson and Samararatne 1988: 229).[10]

To exclude the sociopsychological interpretation of such cases 'careful inquiries about the possibilities for the normal communication of information from one family to the other before the case developed' were conducted, providing 'no evidence of such communication' and making 'it *seem almost impossible* that it could have occurred' (Stevenson and Samararatne 1988: 217, my emphasis). A written record of exactly what the subject said before the two families (the one in which the child is raised, and the one in which he claims to have lived in an earlier incarnation) met was made. Through extensive work, the investigators located 'a family corresponding to the child's statements' (1988: 217), and it became 'possible to identify a deceased person – in each case another child – whose life and death correspond to the subject's statements' (1988: 236). The investigators feel warranted 'in concluding that the subjects of these three cases had all *obtained detailed knowledge* about a particular deceased person *by some paranormal process*' (1988: 237, my emphasis).[11]

This conclusion immediately brings to mind a number of questions. What exactly is the role of the investigators in the construction of each case as they examine the applicability of a child's statements to other persons until it becomes clear that the child is talking about the life of one person, 'and no one else' (Stevenson and Samararatne 1988: 229). Can information held by the child have been acquired through normal channels of communication, ones not fully recognized by Stevenson and Samararatne? Can chance and probability be ruled out as a factor in the case of the one or two specific statements that seem to apply to only one deceased person? The evidence and the manner of its presentation call for careful examination.

Let us first examine the claim that children obtain detailed knowledge about a specific deceased individual by some paranormal process. The argument is made that 'it is extremely unlikely, if not impossible' that 'the subjects might somehow have obtained the correct information they showed by normal means' (Stevenson and Samararatne 1988: 236–7). Consider, however, that parents or outside investigators must find information that corresponds to some of the child's statements (like the name of a village, of a man, or of a deceased child) to locate a family, even a geographically distant one, that 'confirms' the child's view of being someone reincarnated.

Given the positive results of such investigations, one must admit in principle that if the information that corresponds to some of the child's statements sometimes becomes available to those who seek it, it follows that the child may also have had access to the same information through normal channels of communication. In effect, Stevenson and Samararatne admit as much. In the case of a child identified as having died in a landslide in a previous life, Stevenson and Samararatne (1988: 235) cannot rule out the possibility that the child's parents or the child itself overheard others talk of the landslide. If this is so, this explains how it comes about that child can name the place in which the landslide occurred. It seems very likely that a landslide, a relatively rare occurrence, in which as many as seventeen people died, would have been a lively topic of conversation. That the actual family of the child, and the family in which the child is thought to have lived previously, were unrelated and unacquainted before the child identified himself as this or that deceased person would not preclude the identification of the child with the particular person mentioned in conversations heard in passing. In another case, although Stevenson and Samararatne ascertained that the family, in which the child reports memories of a past life and the family in which he presumably lived this past life did not have mutual friends or other connections, they admit that 'there might have been occasion when they happened to be at the same place at the same time ... such as the bus stand or at the hospital (1988: 229). Indeed, 'inquiries showed that each family had some acquaintances or relatives in the community of the other family and each had visited the other community' (1988: 229). Thus, although there is no evidence that the two families 'knew each other or had ever formally met' (1988: 229), there were occasions on which the child could have heard of the so-called previous personality through normal channels of communication.

The point I want to make here is that to identify a family and locality corresponding to some of a child's statements, one needs access to information other than that provided by the child (such as the name of a town or village or the reference to a child who died in a landslide). In other words, someone other than the child must recognize the child's information as applicable to a given locality or family. Failing such recognition the case simply becomes part of the large number of cases in which the child's statements are said not to be sufficiently 'specific to permit tracing a deceased person corresponding to the case' (Stevenson and Samararatne 1988: 218). The case is then unsolved. It may be argued that in such cases it is not that the information lacks specificity, but rather that no one

matches the information proffered by the child with other information available within a given population. Without this connection between some of the child's statements and other statements known by other parties, the search for the family in which the child is said to have lived a previous life cannot be completed.

The information sought by family and investigators to substantiate what are seen as a child's memories of a past life often pertains to tragic deaths of children. Tragedies are probably mentioned in many places, by many individuals, within the hearing of children. In cases that are solved it cannot be 'extremely unlikely that the subject's family could have learned anything normally about the previous personality's family before the case developed' (Stevenson and Samararatne 1988: 218). There is the possibility of normal communication, albeit indirect, between a number of possible sources of information pertaining to the death of a child and children who claim to have suffered a violent death in an earlier life in another locality. Indeed without this possibility there is no information on which parents or investigators can later proceed to reconstruct events they can match with some of the children's statements. The plausibility of the sociopsychological approach cannot be ruled out. Again, as in the case of birthmarks presented as evidence suggestive of reincarnation, it may be impossible to reach definitive conclusions.

Conclusion

The topic of reincarnation certainly takes us directly to the heart of Native world-views and to deeply seated Native convictions and hopes. For this reason alone, in-depth investigation of this theme is essential if one wants to capture 'the essence of the religious philosophy' and the integral part it plays in the life of the people we work with (Rogers 1981: 28). The many and intriguing criteria invoked by Natives in support of their proposition that people are made again merit serious attention. Although the ethnographic record is rich in accounts of reincarnation, we still lack in-depth studies of the ways in which actual conversations influence the manner in which a child is progressively coached in thinking of himself or herself as someone reincarnated. This is an area of investigation we as anthropologists can still improve upon.

A discussion of the most compelling evidence suggestive of reincarnation raises as number of questions. In the case of birthmarks it was pointed out that even if we allow for psychic influence on the formation

of cells and tissues in a foetus, it is probably impossible to disentangle all the possible sources of this influence: the psyches of the parents, of relatives, of friends, or of a disincarnate personality if one wants to consider such a possibility. As a consequence, definitive conclusions concerning the validity of Native interpretations of birthmarks as evidence that a process like reincarnation is actually taking place may never be achieved. Cases of recollections of a former life were found to be equally problematic. In a review of accounts of reincarnation among the Dene Tha, Gitksan, and Wet'suwet'en (Mills 1988b), it was shown that reincarnated subjects, typically reborn to close kinsmen, learn from people in their environment to think of themselves as someone reincarnated. The circumstances suggest that alleged recollections of past lives may be no more than the result of socialization. In the case of the Sri Lankan 'reincarnated' children it was argued that in cases in which parents or investigators match some of the statements made by a child concerning an alleged previous life with a family and a deceased child, there is the possibility that the child identified itself with the deceased child whose death was heard of through normal means of communication. In such cases, as in the ones documented for the Dene Tha, Gitksan, and Wet'suwet'en, the psychosociological interpretation of what is locally recognized as 'recollections of a past life' cannot be ruled out. To proceed further, it appears that a thorough scientific investigation of cases of reincarnation must be an interdisciplinary one, including anthropologists, ethnomethodologists, conversation analysts, psychoanalysts, and geneticists.

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Notes

1 'Je n'ai pu chasser de l'esprit d'une jeune fille la persuasion ou elle était d'avoir vécu antérieurement a sa naissance sous un autre nom et avec des traits autres que ceux que je lui connaissais; ni empêcher une vieille

femme de revendiquer la propriété de l'enfant de sa voisine, sous le spécieux prétexte qu'elle reconnaissait en lui l'âme émigrée de son fils décédé' (Petitot 1876 in Savoie 1970: 79).

2 Chateh is the name of the reservation also known as Assumption (see map in Asch 1981: 338). The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (1987: 91) listed the reservation as Hay Lake with a population of 809 in December 1986. Linguistically, Dene Dha is more appropriate spelling, but the people of Chateh have retained the old spelling, Dene Tha, and I follow suit.

3 Dene Tha are keenly aware that individuals may abuse others through their animal helpers. In Chateh, as among many other Athapaskan groups (Ridington 1968; Mills 1986; D. Smith 1973; Sharp 1986), interpersonal and interfamilial conflicts are still handled, in part, through recourse to animal helpers.

4 While conducting fieldwork I usually record, verbatim, as much as I can of the conversations I enjoy on various Dene Tha topics. To this end, I always carry a pen and writing pad. With most Dene Tha under the age of forty, conversations were conducted in English, often with references to Dene Tha terms used to express the issues discussed. With Dene Tha over the age of forty, conversations were generally in Dene Tha. Over the year, I have gained sufficient mastery of the local dialect to record these interviews or conversations in written form. I often taped the conversations I had with dreamers, transcribed and translated them to the best of my ability, then reviewed the results with bilingual informants.

5 Concerning the topic of cross-sex reincarnation, Mills (1988b: 407) notes that 'the Beaver Indian people, other Athapaskans, and the Inuit are familiar with cases in which someone is reported to have been reincarnated as the opposite sex and [individuals in these groups] are therefore more likely to desire such a change than the coastal people, among whom it is not thought possible and where it could interfere with assuming sex-linked hereditary titles.' Notions of the possible vary in important ways from society to society according to distinctive features of social organization.

6 Mills (personal communication, July 1991) notes that what has changed among Northern Athapaskan hunters and gatherers 'is that nubile girls are no longer married to older men' as was common in the past when 'a young girl might become the second or third wife of a camp leader (who may have been married to a number of women since his childhood.' On that basis it may be that the men's sorrow reflect 'in part that the mar riage pattern is breaking down, and that teenage mothers no longer necessarily settle down with a spouse.'

7 Stevenson is working on the publication of four volumes which include 'color photographs of birth marks and birth defects with the corresponding wounds or lesions on the reported previous personality' (Mills: 1988a: 18). Perhaps the response of geneticists to this work will bring forth more data and interpretations in the light of which one might reconsider these issues.

8 The literature on the stigmatization of the body among Christians may be relevant here, as this phenomenon represents in the eyes of many a classic case of a psychic factor affecting bodily tissues (Vergote 1978: 250–62; De Poray-Madeyski 1940).

9 As Bock (1988: 446) notes, Stevenson 'has had to find ways to verify interview data that many readers would accept if the topic were less controversial.' For a discussion of the techniques and methods of record keeping to establish as far as possible that the information held by a child is accurate and that the information cannot have its source in the child's environment, see Stevenson (1966, 1975a) and Matlock (1990b: 197–8).

10 In the three cases discussed by Stevenson and Samararatne (1988), eight to eighteen per cent of the children's statements are identified as incorrect. These are not accounted for. Can one rule out the possibility that the statements defined as 'incorrect' in one investigation could lead to the identification of another dead person to whom these statements – but not others – would apply? If such an identification were possible, the 'incorrect' statements would become correct, and the 'correct' ones become incorrect. Moreover, could the majority of statements of general applicability also enter this other solution of the case? The status attributed to statements as either correct or incorrect is in effect part of the process of the construction of a case. The work that goes into the construction of each identification of a deceased person to whom the subject's statement may correspond is probably not fully appreciated. The perspectives of conversation analysts and ethnomethodologists are particularly relevant here as they may reflexively clarify the manner in which the findings are constituted.

11 The notion that children may obtain some knowledge by some paranormal process has long been entertained by Buddhist scholars who encounter cases of Tibetan lamas seen as the reincarnation of previous lamas. 'If, as is obvious,' Govinda writes, 'no physical or purely materialistic or scientific explanation is possible' to account for a child's memories of his previous life as a lama, then 'we have to admit that an unknown force is the agent that forms and determines the conception, formation, and development of a new physical body and its consciousness, according to the

inherent directive impulse of that force' (1966: 122). Having admitted the existence of such a force, Govinda adds there is then no 'more natural explanation than to ascribe this impulse to an already existing individual consciousness, which in the moment of its release from its bodily basis (as in death) . . . seizes the still undifferentiated, pliable, and receptive germ of life as the material basis of a new individual organism' (ibid.). A similar view is proposed by Stevenson (1987: 249) when he considers 'ways in which a disincarnate personality might influence the physical body of the next incarnation.' Stevenson assigns the neologism 'psychophore' to 'the body or vehicle of some kind' that 'is necessary to explain the transfer of interrelated imaged, behavioral, and physical memories of the previous person to that of the subject' (Matlock 1990b: 253–4).

In Buddhist culture the identification of a boy as a reincarnated lama is a complex social process, involving local and national, lay and monastic luminaries (Gyatso 1990: 215–18). The successful identification by monks of a boy as a reincarnated lama does not always convince other faithful, nor indeed always convince the identified boy himself that he is a lama reincarnated. For instance, Jhampa Gyatso, now in exile in Paris, who in his boyhood was identified in Tibet as the reincarnation of Dakpo Rinpoche, doubts that he is indeed this reincarnation even though the Dalai Lama himself confirmed him as such: 'Among the Tulkus there are individuals who are recognized as Tulku who are not so. Manipulation may occur ... Now speaking of myself; I was recognized as the reincarnation of this master – but personally I do not know if I am [this reincarnation] or not; that I do not really know. I do not remember any more. Apparently I had memories when I was very young. *They knew that I was saying certain things.* (Quoted in Bärlocher 1986: 251; my translation from French, my emphasis).

MARIE MAUZÉ

11 The Concept of the Person and Reincarnation among the Kwakiutl Indians*[1]

ABSTRACT. This paper, mainly based on data collected by Franz Boas, points out that the notion of reincarnation in the traditional culture of the Kwakiutl is far more complex than Marcel Mauss interpreted it. The distinction introduced by Joan Lafontaine between 'individual' and 'person' allows the author to show that Kwakiutl society is composed of individuals, some of them becoming persons, the chief only becoming a real person. On the basis of the different components making an individual (a body and a soul) and a person (a body, a soul, and a name), it can be shown that the soul of the dead is reincarnated into a new being – an individual – while names representing mythical ancestors are embodied in persons. Therefore there is no perfect identity of soul and name as Mauss (1968) posited.

Before writing about the concept of the person among the Kwakiutl Indians of the Northwest Coast I should position myself within my tradition. In Europe and more especially in France, since Marcel Mauss, anthropologists have succeeded in developing the concept of the person among cultures which were without writing. In contrast, American anthropology has focused on personality (Benedict 1934). Indeed, 'culture and personality' designate a specific research domain, central to the development of American cultural anthropology.** The opposition

*In memory of my friend and colleague Susan Golla.

**This statement provides a strong temptation to engage in a slight essay into anthropological history.

Since the early years of this century, it has been received opinion among British, French, and some American commentators that American anthropology prior to about 1960 was strongly or basically psychological in orientation. The validity of this opinion

between American and European traditions is clearly pointed out by Mauss in his paper published in 1938, 'Une catégorie de l'esprit humain: la notion de personne, celle de moi' ('A category of the human mind: the notion of the person, the notion of self'). He says, 'Nor shall I speak to you of psychology, anymore than I shall of linguistics. I shall leave aside everything which relates to the 'self', the conscious personality as such' (in Carrithers et al. 1985: 3). Mauss makes explicit what he is interested in: 'My subject is entirely different, and independent of this [psychology]. It is one related to social history. Over the centuries, in numerous societies, how has it slowly evolved – not the sense of 'self' (*moi*), but the notion or concept that men in different ages have formed of it?' (ibid.). Following Mauss's steps, anthropologists have developed their research in many directions.

In all societies, on the Northwest Coast or elsewhere, the notion of person is connected to social organization itself, as Mauss has pointed out. Moreover, the person is a fundamental category of thought that goes beyond the limits of a specific society and is thus a universal in human thought (Hallowell 1976: 359). This assessment is exemplified by the remarkable volume of essays on *La notion de personne en Afrique Noire* (Dieterlen 1973) which gives an idea of the very complex elaboration of African thought with regard to the person and its links to the totality of the world. However, in order to avoid any confusion, it is useful to distinguish between two notions: (1) that of individual and (2) that of person,

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depends upon the kind of psychology being considered. Commentators differ on this point.

There is no doubt that one kind of psychology had a profound impact on American anthropologists in the early twentieth century: the psychology, as well as the philosophy, of John Dewey as set forth in such works as *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy* (1910), How we Think (1910), and *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922). Dewey's 'instrumentalist' kind of empirical naturalism also had considerable influence on, for example, Franz Boas and his students up to about 1930. As is well known, they founded or chaired many North American anthropology departments. However, the influence was reciprocal. Few philosophers or psychologists have been as cognizant of cultural anthropology as was John Dewey.

The assertion that the 'culture and personality' field of interest was 'central to ... American anthropology' must be challenged. The undersigned editor was a very junior graduate student in anthropology at Columbia University at a time when Ruth Benedict was active and the Kardiner-Linton seminars were drawing a large attendance. I doubt that anyone there was under the illusion that culture and personality studies were central in American anthropology. Although exciting and interesting, they were always a minority development on the North American academic scene; not predominant even at Columbia. [R.S.]

two notions that are linked by a dynamic process. I use Lafontaine's definition of the individual as a 'mortal being' who exists in and of himself or herself and the person as an 'object of social significance' (Lafontaine 1985: 126). I will show that in Kwakiutl thought not everybody becomes a person or at least a full person, and that there exist degrees or gradations of personhood: only a 'real' person is a full person. This is typically the case of the chief; the nobles are persons and commoners individuals.

One of the first questions that one might ask concerning the individual and the person is 'what are they made of.' In Kwakiutl society, human beings are seen as composite creatures, made of material and immaterial components and attributes. The Kwakiutl conceive of the individual as a body and a soul, two components which are given to him, and the person as a socialized body, a soul and a name or numerous names which have to be inherited and/or achieved by him. The complexity of this configuration, and its meaning for reincarnation are discussed below.

The Body

Unfortunately, detailed data concerning the biological aspect of human beings are lacking in the ethnographic literature.[2] Pregnancy is believed to be the result of sexual intercourse, but we do not know which humoral substances are brought in by the two parents in the constitution of a child and how it affects his position in society. The sex of the child is thought to be determined at the time of fertilization by sympathetic acts or, as Walens (1982: 71) puts it, by analogic causality acts, for example, by putting articles associated with male or female crafts under the parents' bed during conception (Ford 1941: 157).

In Kwakiutl thought an individual possesses at least a physical body and a soul. The body provides the material substance, a substance which is perishable. What characterizes a physical body is that its life span is limited by death, an event which is linked to the departure of the soul, be it caused by violence, disease, witchcraft, or natural causes. The body of an individual has a biological birth and a biological death, which do not correspond chronologically to the social birth and social death of the person.

The Soul

The soul, a central element in the conception of the person, constitutes the immaterial component of the human being. All human beings and

indeed all forms of life have souls. The soul is what animates a body, and it not only stands to body as energy to substance but it also brings humanness to it. The generic term for soul is *bexwune*, from the root *beku*, 'man' and is cognate to *begwunemene* which, according to Boas, means 'manhood' or 'quality of man' (Boas 1947b, ms: 112, 113; Boas 1947a and 1911, 1921: 1451–2). It is sometimes referred as *bexunaye*, man on body (1921: 728).[3] The term itself suggests that human souls are distinct from the souls of other life forms.

The focus of the soul is the head. It sits on the crown of the head when it leaves the human body or when it is about to enter it. It is spoken of as having an existence in its own right. Being an autonomous entity, separable from the body even in life, the soul watches over people during the day and travels about the world at night. During sleep, the soul frequently travels, causing dreams, and coming back at daylight (Boas 1921: 715, 725). As an immaterial substance, the soul is described as a shadow (ibid.) or as smoke (ibid.: 728; 1940: 615). It also has the ability to 'shrink' and to 'dilate.' It is said to be small (the size of a thumb) during the day, becoming big while travelling (1940: 615).

The soul is the vital element of human life; indeed it is sometimes metaphorically referred to as the 'blood' of the body (Boas 1966: 138). When the soul departs during sleep, it is said that the body has no strength (Boas 1921: 725). Its outings can be dangerous, because it can be attracted by ghosts to the land of the dead. When an individual dies, it is said that 'his mind has gone weak' or 'he has lost his mind'[4] or else 'he has gone through,' meaning that he has reached the world of the dead (Boas 1932b: 212). Biological death occurs when the soul separates from the body, although it is not very clear from the data collected by Boas when the soul actually leaves – either a few days before death or on the fourth day after death (Boas 1891: 58; 1932: 211; see also Curtis 1915: 60).

The 'social death' takes place during the mourning ceremony at the funeral potlatch, which is given by the deceased's family, and *numaym* one year or more after the burial. A mask called the *emus* mask is displayed portraying one of the crests of the *numaym*: 'the thunderbird has come to fetch him to his own, what he was before he became a man (Boas 1932b: 213; Ford 1941: 222–3). This ceremony raises the dead to the status of an ancestor. The crest depicts the ancestor in its animal form. Boas (1935: 42) says : 'the chiefs of the *numaym* have for their crests the animals whose form they had while in the sky.' Although we cannot talk of a second funeral – because there is no special treatment

of the corpse – we could talk about a 'second' death or a 'social' death in so far as it severs the ties that linked the individual to the society of humans. The burial is followed by a long period of mourning including the performance of rites and the observation of taboos by the close family and especially the widow.[5]

At death the body separates into two parts that still are named by the same word, *lâ'lenoq*: *'lâ'lenoq* is used both for a complete corpse and for the ghost which is sometimes referred as the 'spirit of the dead,' not to be confused with the soul (Boas 1940: 615; 1966: 168). While the corpse is made of flesh which decays, the ghost is a noncorporeal but nonetheless – in certain precise circumstances[6] – a visible entity with a human form and conceived as the double of the corpse, with no flesh but made of bones 'for he has the whole body of a man, and his bones are those who have long been dead' (Boas 1921: 626–7; 1940: 616–17; 1966: 168). This would imply that ghosts have human form but not human substance. There are nonetheless tangible creatures who are made of bones of the ancestors and thus can be envisioned as creating a link between generations. The fact that ghosts are anthropomorphic and are reduced to a skeleton, on the one hand, makes a distinction between bones and flesh, and on the other hand, indicates that bones are permanent elements of the body. Bones have to be treated properly to enable regeneration of bodies: for example, salmon bones have to be thrown back into the water to produce more salmon (see Harkin 1990: 98; Kan 1989: 50). Since bones participate in the principle of regeneration, we are obviously dealing with the idea that the group of human beings is constant in each social unit and that consequently the rebirth of a new being is made possible by the recycling of skeletons separated from their former bodies. The body has to be inhabited by a soul to make a complete being which is constituted by the conjunction of two autonomous principles: that of regeneration and that of animation.

Ghosts live under the earth, the underworld being 'the habitat of people after they have left their humanness'[7] (Goldman 1975: 196). Their villages are similar to those of human beings, but night and day are inverted (Boas 1890: 59; 1932b: 216; 1935: 131). The underworld or 'lowest world' is conceived as one of reversal.

What happens to the soul after death? The souls of the dead travel to the world of animals before coming back to the human world. It is said that 'the souls of the Kwakiutl go to a country like ours – similar to that of the humans – and continue to be what they have been on earth' (Boas 1932b: 216). If so, that is, if souls live in 'our' world, they occupy

areas or zones usually characterizing the habitat of animals and animals/spirits: the sky, the woods, and the ocean. It is believed that 'the soul of the sea-hunters go to the home of the killerwhales, that of the land-hunters go to the house of the wolves.' Twins go to the Salmon Country (or Salmon Maker) and common people become owls (Boas 1921: 727; 1930: 257). Also it is said that the souls of sea hunters actually become killer whales, while the souls of hunters of land animals actually become wolves (Boas 1896: 579). If, for instance, men become owls or rather 'go towards the owl masks [which are] the owls' (Boas 1932b: 257), this seems to indicate that masks are channels which allow the passage from the human world to the animal world and vice versa (Walens 1981). It appears that in the Kwakiutl system of belief the soul of a human has to reach the animal realm and inhabit an animal in order to be reborn in the body of another human. By the same token it is the social grouping which is significant in terms of the place of residence of the soul before reincarnation, whereas for the Tlingit it is the manner of death which plays that role (Matlock 1990a: 11). However, death at sea is feared by the Kwakiutl. In this case, the soul is released into the land of the sea otters, which capture it. The soul is then lost. Since it has been released in a 'foreign' world, that of fish and sea mammals, it cannot be reborn in the human world (Walens 1981: 60).

Reincarnation

The soul is an entity that 'lives' after death, sojourning in another world till the body of the dead person is fully decomposed. The soul is then free to be reincarnated in the individual's grandchild, skipping one generation (Boas 1921: 705). Sometimes the interval between the death of an individual and his reincarnation in a new being can be short: 'The soul of a deceased person returns again in the first child born after his death' (Boas 1891, quoted in Matlock 1990a). Indeed, the Kwakiutl thought of babies as ancestors who had returned among the living, an event usually presaged by dreams. Proofs of reincarnation are numerous and often related to physical features or specific skills (Boas 1932b: 202; Ford 1941: 29; Spradley 1969: 188). A baby who has a birthmark, for example, where an ancestor had a scar is said to be the reincarnation of that specific person. The same idea is evoked by the case of twins said to be injured by a harpoon while incarnated in their salmon form who thus went on as humans to bear the scars of those wounds (Boas 1921:

713; 1932b: 203). In other words, in Kwakiutl experience and thought, the reincarnated body bears the imprint of actions taken on the former body as if specific attributes are conveyed between bodies through the channel of the soul. This seems to be also true of qualities and skills, for example, in the case of a young adult who demonstrates the same special skills in woodcarving as one of his dead relatives.

It may be useful to specify some additional characteristics of reincarnation beliefs among the Kwakiutl. In one case an old Nimpkish woman (one of twins), feeling that she was near death, asked the chief Great Bear whether he would like her to become his child and whether he wanted her to be reborn as a boy or a girl. Seven months after her death, a boy was born to the chief's wife, although she was quite old (Boas 1891: 614). This example, as well as that of a young woman (a twin) desiring to be reborn to her father's younger brother's wife as a boy (quoted in Matlock 1990a: 12), shows that the Kwakiutl recognize the possibility of coming back as the opposite sex. Sex is apparently not an unchangeable attribute of the individual (see de Laguna 1954: 178). This is consistent, as we shall see, with the Kwakiutl conception of the social group. In one case cited by Boas (1891: 611), a chief (again one of twins), who was murdered by another chief while hiding the goods he planned to give away at a potlatch, came back as his son's son. Still very young, this child disclosed the murder to his father and led him to the place where the property was hidden. The young man became chief and presumably took the name of his grandfather: 'Now the people knew that Ank oa'lagyilis had returned' (ibid.). All these cases of reincarnation should be interpreted as dealing with the personal or individual soul, the one that leaves at death to join with owls or wolves. The last case, of the young man becoming a chief, has been interpreted as indicating a 'pattern of sex-linked hereditary titles' (Mills 1988b: 407). This statement seems compatible with the question of the transmission of a name rather than with the question of the reincarnation of a soul.[8]

What is important is that souls return to the common stock of souls of the *numaym* (Boas 1932b: 216),[9] the *numaym* being the basic social unit in Kwakiutl organization; its name stands for 'people of the same kind.'[10] The immaterial part of the human being is thus part of a substance – a substance of being – which exists before the individual, and a fortiori before the person, and which will survive him. The idea of the soul is thus that of a 'flow' of substance around a closed system, so that at death the soul returns to a stock of substance, owned by the group of which the individual is a member. It appears that the question

of ancestrality cannot be separated from the idea of reincarnation of a soul at each birth and a recuperation of a soul at each death. Man is thus conceived of as being the result of a process that (1) materializes a body, (2) gives it a soul from the common stock, and (3) articulates a body and a soul to make an individual. The individual is singular by its body but through the soul participates in the perpetuation of the group. Thus, the soul is an important element in social integration because it establishes a link between the individual and the group, social integration having a different meaning than social significance (see Lafontaine 1985).

The Person

One of the most fundamental aspects of the constitution of the person is the acquisition of names. In Kwakiutl society naming permits the incorporation of the individual in the *numaym* and allows the continuity of the descent line. This affiliation is not always through the paternal line (see Boas 1920; Lévi-Strauss 1982). The name also places the individual in society and thus operates as a social marker. It gives an identity to the individual and assigns him a position and a role, according to his rank of birth.

In kwa'kwala (Kwakiutl language), the suffix for name is *klä*, which literally means 'on top of head' (Boas 1947a: 374). It is found in such expressions as 'to have a man's name,' 'to have a potlatch name,' or 'to have a secular name.' It appears that in the Kwakiutl system of representation, the name is separated from the body and is located above the soul. All elements – body, soul, and name – are necessary to the making of a person, but the name is what differentiates a person from an individual, what perfects an individual to make it a person. The reiterated perfecting of a man throughout his life is accomplished through the acquisition of different successive names. It is in acquiring, achieving, and upholding names related to positions in the *numaym* that a person becomes a 'social' person and a 'moral' person aware of its self and destiny.

Names are very complex entities in Kwakiutl and other Northwest Coast societies. There are different types of names. One must distinguish between common or everyday names and title-names. Common names can be kin names or nicknames. Title-names are considered as 'big' names or 'real' names. Only noble people or well-born people will receive title-names. Commoners are by definition people who do not

have ritually assumed names. Among title-names, one must distinguish between two types: those that are hereditary and stay in the *numaym* as 'myth names,' and those that are transmitted through marriage. George Hunt provided the following information regarding head chiefs' names (Boas 1921: 823–4): 'They never changed their names from the beginning, when the first human beings existed in the world; for the names can not go out of the family of the head chiefs of the numayms, but only to the eldest one of the children of the head chief. And the names cannot be given to the husband of the daughter, none of the whole number of the names, beginning with the ten-months child's name until he takes the name of his father, the name of the head chief. These are called the myth names. The only names of the head chiefs of the numayms that can be given in marriage are the names he obtained in marriage from his father-in-law, and also the privileges, for he cannot give his own privileges to his son-in-law.' Real names are considered as gifts given by the ancestor to the humans: 'These will come to be the names when I come to take my place in the world, when I come being a man in this world coming down here' (Boas 1935: 66). They are the property of the *numaym* and are attached to privileges. All titles are ranked and have to be validated by a potlatch.

Real names are endowed with power and correspond to spiritual qualities that men who carry them are expected to live up to. It seems inappropriate in that context to use the word soul-name as did Goldman (1975), because names and souls are different entities: souls refer to skills and physical features when names even if 'they are commonly considered to be spiritual attributes' (ibid.: 56) refer to rights and obligations, which are indeed given but mainly have to be assumed.

The small number of names dealt with by this paper all characterize the original bearer as great, powerful, generous, sometimes menacing, but above all wealthy.[11] A great majority of names refer to human actions involving the distribution of wealth and also to the state of being wealthy. As an illustration, let us quote a few of those real-names: 'Giving wealth,' 'Giving potlatch everywhere,' 'To whom people can paddle,' or 'Where you can get copper from' or 'Whose body is all wealth' are some examples (see Boas 1897; Spradley 1969; Ford 1941). Because names relate to jurisdiction over particular places and resources, it is names, not people, that control property and privileges. They allow the individual to participate in the social life of the *numaym* and in the transfer of wealth in the potlatch, making the individual one becomes a person.

A man acquires successive names throughout his life. A child's first name is always the name of the place where he is born, for example *c'axis*, that is, Fort Rupert (Boas 1921: 653). The equation between a man's name and a place name roots a person to the land where the ancestor came down to earth and became human, bringing with him the names that constitute the 'backbone' of the *numaym*. When the child is ten months old, he receives what the Kwakiutl calls his ochre name (his face is painted with ochre). This name which has belonged to the family since mythical times is given to the child by his grandparents, usually on both sides, thus making him a member of two *numaym*. He then receives a young man's name, which allows him to distribute property within his *numaym*, and later a man's name. If he is the first son of a head chief, he will also acquire his father's name (see Boas 1921: 825–6; 1925: 113 sq). A young chief will also receive a *tlasila (dhlulaxa)* name which will reassert and strengthen his secular title, as well as one or more *ćeqa*, or winter ceremonial names, which will make him a member of the dancing societies. The *tlasila* or *dhlulaxa* ceremony was held in late winter after *ćeqa* or winter ceremonies, or at any other time during the year (Boas 1897: 621). Today, ceremonial procedures of the potlatch have been considerably shortened – they are held after the *ćeqa*, just before the distribution of goods. *Tlasila* names are believed to have come down from heaven where the ancestral spirits dwelt. They are considered by Kwakiutl people as *tlugwe* or 'treasure.'

For the Kwakiutl names are autonomous entities which like bones have eternal existence. Their bearers may live and die, they will go on forever. They require, however, a human carrier to be brought to life or to be 'active.' When they do not have a holder they are said to be empty or to 'float' (see Halpin 1984). Among the Kwakiutl names are usually transmitted at each generation without interruption and given to a new carrier by the holder who has to divest himself of his title while he is still alive. As pointed out by Goldman (1975: 27) 'interruption [in transmission] would be a serious break in the flow of life.' Somehow names deprived of a receptacle for a certain period of time lose their strength. When this is the case, they are assigned to a lower status carrier (Boas 1920).

Only one person at a time can carry a specific name. However, ethnographic texts report cases of men being holders of more than one real name. This happened especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when there were not enough nobles within the *numaym* entitled to fill positions corresponding to a *numaym*'s names.

For each of their names, they were considered as separate social persons and could receive or give wealth in only one name at a time.[12] To change names is to assume a new identity related to specific rights and privileges, the same owned by the previous holder of that particular name. The acquisition of successive names does not entail an accumulation of status, but rather a transformation of status, of identity. The person is thus the manifestation of the name, the living representative of the succession of (related) name-holders.

Names go from one bearer to another; each name is a 'flow name' which has its own history and its own 'weight,' laying out a network of relationships between persons and ancestors and among persons creating a differentiation in status and in degree of personhood. It is an abstract entity that gives content to a human receptacle making him a sort of an emblematic figure playing a role, but at the same time enabling society to perpetuate itself through human actions. In other words, name-holders or persons are incarnations of their ancestors, while an ascendant is reincarnated in an individual.

The permanent intertwining of the semi-autonomous destinies of bodies, souls, and names corresponds, each time, to a human destiny reflecting the history of the group. Individual destiny should then be envisioned as resulting from processes of different types (social, religious) and meanings which entail the growing and perfecting of forces, on the one hand, the alteration and disintegration of forces, on the other. The person's destiny is also determined by the action of supernatural powers linked to names that men must master through the learning and repetition of ritual acts. Human destiny is thus a sort of repository of social and religious forces.

The acquiring of successive names throughout a man's life marks the progress towards full personhood. In that regard, the personage of the Kwakiutl chief should be mentioned because he represents what human destiny can best accomplish in terms of identification of a person with his group. The chief of the *numaym* is the *numaym*. He is the repository of the material and symbolic wealth of the *numaym* and has the ability to acquire supernatural power as well. The chief is the one who has reached the ultimate degree of personhood. One can say that the *numaym* is a 'collective' person constituted by unequally completed persons. It appears that in Kwakiutl society, hierarchy is an inherent element of personhood. As Marjorie Halpin (1984: 60) writes of the Tsimshian, being without a name – in that case a *naxnox* name – is being outside the social order. I also agree with her when she insists

(ibid.) that being 'without such a name was less a social class than a moral condition.'

In conclusion, there are more questions to be asked than answers to be given as a result of the imbalance between the quality of data dealing with the concept of reincarnation and that dealing with the concept of person. Mauss's interpretation of the concept of person and its relation to the concept of reincarnation needs to be reconsidered. His analysis of Northwest Coast societies in general, and Kwakiutl society in particular, interprets sbcieties as closed or bounded worlds in which important social action is accomplished by persons who are born with names and social functions; under those names, they re-enact predetermined roles. All persons who are bearers of a particular name are reincarnations of the ancestors who also bore that name, the stock of names and souls being limited to a fixed number in the group (Mauss 1968: 133–4; Allen 1985: 33). Mauss goes as far as to speak of 'titled souls and titled spirits.' No doubt Kwakiutl society reveals more dynamic processes at work (see also Golla 1988). It is inappropriate to consider that the person who takes up a name is typically thought of as the reincarnation of a former holder of that name, who in turn may be thought of as a former holder of the name, creating a line of reincarnation stretching back to the mythic ancestor. In fact we are not dealing with the concept of reincarnation, but with that of incarnation: the name represents the ancestor or is the channel through which the ancestor is incarnated in a human being.

Though they are both eternal and immaterial, souls and names are elements of different nature. The soul is a substance of being which makes the individual, while the name is an attribute which defines the social person. Names differentiate persons and assign roles. The reincarnation of a soul in a new being is not to be considered as the reincarnation of a social person, with all his attributes, rights, and obligations. Moreover, names belong to different categories. Some names are recognized as appropriate to children, young men, adults, and elders. Others are associated with birth order and thus with rank. A man throughout his life may acquire about a dozen names, so that there is not a single name which subsumes all others. In other words, there is no unity of the name which would allow us to associate it with the soul which is, by definition, unique. Moreover, real names which belong to the *numaym* are always transmitted when the former bearer is still alive and not at his death and never leave the world of the living.[13] Those names are given with regard to birth order and not according to birth-

marks which would indicate, for instance, that a person *x* is the reincarnation of person *y*. Finally, in Kwakiutl society, described as a 'house' society, rules of descent and succession are applied in terms of political and economic interests under the cover of kinship rather than in terms of kinship proper. The constitution of noble lines is thus not only based on mechanisms of filiation alone.

Anthropologists interested today in the concept of reincarnation among the Kwakiutl would gain a lot not only by investigating more cases of reincarnation but also by collecting data about the relationships between bones, blood, and other substances. This data would allow a better understanding of the contemporary Kwakiutl idea of the individual and of the person.

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Notes

1 I am using here the classical ethnographic transcription of the word Kwakiutl. It is better transcribed as Kwagul (Kwagiulth). This term more specifically refers to the 'Fort Rupert tribes.' In the past ten years or so, a few scholars have promoted the descriptive word 'Kwakwa ka'wakw' meaning 'those who speak Kwak'wala (Suttles 1990: 15).

2 This paper is for the most part based on ethnological data found in the literature. Although I have done fieldwork among the Kwakiutl, I have not specifically investigated the question of the constitution of the person and that of reincarnation beliefs.

3 According to Boas (1940: 615–16), among the Koskimo, the soul is called *bEkwa'a e*, 'something human,' and among the Nakwaxdox, *bEgwa'nEmgEnl*, 'human mask.'

4 In Boas and Hunt texts the word 'mind' is mentioned a few times as related to soul and death. Does it mean that the distinction between *spiritus* and *anima* is used by the anthropologist as a Western category of thought or does the word 'mind' relate to Kwakiutl categories. It would be useful to identify the native terms for mind and spirit in contrast or in

association with the word 'soul.' In her paper on 'Persons, names and selves among traditional Nuu-Chah-Nulth,' Susan Golla has shown that in this culture what humans have and animals and very likely women do not have is a mind (Golla 1988: 3–4), women have vaginas. Mind in the story of the creation of the first Ts'ishaa?atH man and therefore of the social group 'precedes physical life, just as in myth times human life preceded animal' (ibid.: 3). In Nuu-Chah-Nulth thought, mind is associated with action and with personhood. In the Coast Tsimshian language the word for soul and spirit is the same, *haayuk*, (Dunn 1978: 36). Among the Tlingit mind/soul make one entity (Kan 1989: 52–3).

5 In the original framework of the paper (1988), I chose not to emphasize the significance of mortuary practices in the construction of the person. This question has been dealt with for the Heiltsuk by Harkin (1990); see also Kan (1989), for the Tlingit.

6 It is said that they are like air or foam (Boas 1935: 132). Ghosts appear just before the death of a person to fetch the soul (Boas 1932b: 181). Ghosts are feared and avoided by the living. Their presence near villages can cause bad weather, and their sight is deadly. Ghosts are visible when they come to fetch the soul of a person before the death. If ghosts have the power of taking life away, they also have the power of bringing back to life someone who has been killed.

7 Goldman (1975: 196) rightly points out that 'the sky was the habitat before people became human ... in their primordial state in the sky, human beings had human substance but not human form.'

8 Mills (1988b), who has recently done fieldwork among the Kwakiutl, asserts that the Kwakiutl are familiar with the idea of multiple reincarnations related to persons of high status associated with chiefs' names. To my knowledge the hypothesis is not clearly formulated in the scattered information dealing with that specific question in the early works of Boas.

9 The exact quotation is: 'It is said that the soul of the dead returns to the ancestors of the clans.'

10 The basic social unit in Kwakiutl social organization is the *numaym*, meaning 'people of the same kind' (Boas 1966: 37). The *numaym* was described by Lévi-Strauss (1982) as having characteristics similar to those of the European Medieval house. Lévi-Strauss describes the *numaym* as 'a corporate group (*personne morale*) holding an estate made up of material and immaterial wealth, which perpetuates itself through the transmission of its name, its goods, and its titles down a real or imaginary line, considered as legitimate as long as its continuity can express itself in the language of kinship or of affinity, and most often both' (1982: 174). Noble

members of the *numaym* claim their legitimate descent through unbroken descent from the ancestor, referred to as 'chief root' or 'chief ahead' (Boas 1966: 42). Only noble people have names or titles ranked in a specific order determining the relationships among their holders and with regard to the society as a whole. Common people who do not have such names are called 'the house men of the chief' (*begwil*) (ibid.: 44).

11 When they are not describing the source or the distribution of wealth, they are metaphors for wealth: for example, 'Big Whale' (marine world is a source of wealth) or 'Big Mountain' (meaning mountain of blankets) or 'Big Copper.' A few names describe physical features like 'Fool's Face' or 'Four Fathom Face'; instead they have to be interpreted in terms of moral features and can be related to the expression 'to lose one's face,' used when a chief challenged by a rival does not keep up to his name and loses prestige (see Boas 1966). Contrary to the *naxnox* names of the Tsimshian, real names can be duplicated (see Halpin 1984b). Further, one can find the same names in different *numaym*. Chiefs' masks or *gikaml* are usually displayed at potlatches when property is distributed, or when Coppers are shown or broken. The chief's mask always portraying Dzonoqwa is held in front of the chief's face. In Kwakiutl mythology, Dzonoqwa is considered as a source of wealth (see, for example, Lévi-Strauss 1982).

12 This is the case among the Lekwiltoq, the southernmost tribe of the Kwakiutl. Within the *numaym* of the subtribes (Wikakai, Wiwakam, Walatsama, Kwexa) that made up the whole Lekwiltoq group at the end of the nineteenth century, one case shows that a chief held three positions (thus three names) in one of the *numaym* of the Walatsama, while a second case indicates that another chief held three positions within one of the *numaym* of the Wiwakai and three more in one of the *nuamym* of the Wiwakam (Mauzé 1985, vol. 2: 427).

13 Lévi-Strauss (1982: 184) mentions the ambiguity of the system of succession, the transfer of titles from father to son being either immediate or deferred.

MICHAEL E. HARKIN

12 Person, Time, and Being: Northwest Coast Rebirth in Comparative Perspective

ABSTRACT. Reincarnation beliefs are prevalent in Northwest Coast cultures. We must, however, be careful to distinguish Northwest Coast reincarnation beliefs from those in Western cultures. In the latter, reincarnation represents a hypervaluation of the individual and an undervaluation of the group. This phenomenon in the West appears to be related to social-historical processes of alienation. Northwest Coast reincarnation beliefs, on the contrary, emphasize the continuity of the group as well as the person. In Northwest Coast cultures, several modes of spatiotemporal transcendence are present, in addition to human-to-human metempsychosis, including dances of the Winter Ceremonial. It is necessary to view reincarnation within the context of eschatology and the cultural category of the person.

This essay will examine reincarnation beliefs on the Northwest Coast, focusing on the Upper North Wakashan cultures (Heiltsuk, Oowekeeno, and Haisla). These people live on the coast of what is now British Columbia, to the north of the Kwakiutl, who are also members of the North Wakashan language family. Marked cultural similarities exist between the Kwakiutl and the Upper North Wakashan cultures, but not to the degree that the latter may be thought of as 'Northern Kwakiutl' (see Drucker 1940).

Several scholars (for example, Wike 1952; Mills 1988a, 1988b; Kan 1989; Matlock 1990a) have identified reincarnation as a relevant concept on the Northwest Coast. However, while reincarnation beliefs are a significant element of Northwest Coast Native belief systems, they must be distinguished from Western concepts of reincarnation. An examination of data from the Northwest Coast shows that reincarnation or

metempsychosis can be comprehended only within the context of specific cultural constructions of the person and temporality.

As Marcel Mauss's seminal essay on the category of the person demonstrates, in non-Western cultures personhood is constructed differently than in Western cultures (Mauss 1985). The category of the person in the legal-moral sense is, for Mauss, the product of a long process of cultural evolution. In tribal societies, specifically totemic ones, the person is an actor, a *personnage*, who plays a fixed role determined by his or her place in a timeless order, and marked by the title name (Mauss 1985; Allen 1985). Role and identity merge; tribal peoples are thus akin to those in our society who *'are* their jobs.' While this extreme view of the tribal person, in which all actions are presupposed, is clearly false, it is important to recognize this quality of role or *persona*, as I will call it, in the constitution of the person. If we speak then of 'reincarnation,' we must take into account what is being recycled or regenerated. Is it the person *in toto* or elements of the person? Do these elements occur collectively or individually? Is it possible in fact to describe any single mode of reincarnation?

In the view that I will expound, the Northwest Coast peoples' concept of the person involves a self or personal essence, which is associated with the life force or soul, as well as a persona, which is related to the title name. The relationship between the two constitutes the focal point of the Northwest Coast concept of the person. Both elements of the person are connected to forms and stages of being beyond the living individual, and thus to expanded temporalities. 'Reincarnation,' – an expansion of the temporality of being beyond the individual's life span, – must be viewed in this context if it is to have any analytic value at all.

Reincarnation: Western Models[1]

Although Plato theorized about reincarnation, most Western scholarship has taken Aristotle's lead in refusing to entertain the possibility of rebirth. Western religious thought has, until very recently, excluded reincarnation from consideration altogether. When it does consider the possibility, it falls back upon a dualistic, 'one body, one soul' approach that, for a variety of reasons, is not adequate for examining non-Western eschatologies (see MacGregor 1982). This emphasis on the 'pure' type of reincarnation is a reification and excludes a range of eschatological phenomena, which are important from the native point of view, but 'invisible' from the Western perspective.

Western science, our culture's most prestigious discourse, is constrained by its materialist, positivist orientation from examining such questions at all. The soul as such is excluded from consideration, replaced by reductive models of cognition as the product of the electrochemical functions of the brain. Both scientific and theological discourses are products of the same underlying concept of the person as a dual entity (see Mauss 1985).

This Western concept of the person presupposes a fundamental problem of the relationship between body and mind, individual and group. The problematic relationship between individual and group is at the core of the sociological traditions chartered both by Weber and Durkheim, whose work shares, if nothing else, a fully fledged concept of the person as distinct from the society of which he is a member. These assumptions colour popular as well as scholarly conceptions of reincarnation in Western culture. Thus, when looking at reincarnation beliefs in Western or non-Western cultures, we must make use of Mauss's insight into the cultural construction of the person and be aware that these beliefs are specific to concepts of the person (see Mauss 1985).[2]

Reincarnation beliefs in Western culture appear as a cultural mode of 'solving' the problem of the opposition of body and mind, individual and society. These problems are not unique to Western cultures, but their centrality is. Thus, Schmied (1989) posits the growth in reincarnation beliefs among some segments of increasingly complex Western societies as a means of dealing with the problem of multiple, irreconcilable demands placed upon the individual by various social roles. The cyclic temporality of reincarnation allows for the recapture of lost possibilities and the transcendence of contradictions inherent in modern Western life.

Identity

This distinction between Western formulations of reincarnation and the beliefs found in many tribal societies is evident in the criterion of social identity. In the dominant Western conception of reincarnation, identity is always discontinuous. That is, there is no 'natural' affinity between predecessor and reincarnate, except for the relationship of reincarnation itself.

In this view, one may with difficulty recapture the forgotten identity of past lives by means of a mode of awareness that is present in some

people and that may be developed in others (see Cranston and Williams 1984; Stevenson 1987). In this context the appearance of signs and their interpretation – leading often to highly esoteric fields of research – provide the basis for making an obscure connection. Archival or archeological research, for instance, may provide proof of reincarnation. A young American girl in the 1920s believed she was a French-Canadian soldier in a previous life; a member of her family finds correspondences between key elements of the girl's story and archival records found in Canada (Cranston and Williams 1984: 69–72). Recovering this hidden connection may be the major life's-work of those who suspect past lives.

It need scarcely be pointed out that this method of exegesis – finding and interpreting hidden evidence with the help of special methodologies – is characteristic of the epistemologies of literate cultures.[3] One particularly important characteristic of literate methods is their capacity for *displacement*: their ability to point specifically and plausibly to distant places and times.[4] The possibility of being the reincarnation of a Roman centurion or Egyptian pharaoh is admissible and even, depending on one's standards of evidence, 'provable.'

While signs and their interpretation play an important role in Northwest Coast rebirth, they are less problematic and are usually only one of several factors pointing to a rebirth that is in some sense overdetermined (see Matlock 1990a). That is to say, membership in a corporate group, such as a clan or lineage, implies a complex relationship to the past and future of that group, a relationship which is very likely to include reincarnation as one element.

What is more, in Western reincarnation, the connection between present and past selves, once made, relativizes the social identity of the person, who is, after all, experiencing only the most recent incarnation of the 'same' soul. Solidarity with kinship, occupational, gender, or other groups is often enfeebled, rather than reinforced (as in tribal societies) (see Cranston and Williams 1984: 69–99). Thus, in the case of the young American girl who believed she had had a previous life, a family member stated that she always seemed much different from other members of her family, 'a queer little mite' and of much darker complexion than the others (Cranston and Williams 1984: 70). In her previous life the girl had been of a different gender and ethnic group (her family was American, anglophone, and Protestant). Thus, reincarnation appears in this case, and in the many similar cases, to involve great social and temporal distance between successive lives. Certainly the previous life does not tie individuals more strongly to this-life

gender, kinship, or ethnic groups. An interesting question for further investigation would be the possible relation between attribution of reincarnation and perceived deviation from group norms or standards. Recall that the young girl is 'dark almost to swarthiness' in contrast to her family's fair features (Cranston and Williams 1984: 70).

While specific Western cases of reincarnation may or may not be correlated with social deviation or anomaly, reincarnation beliefs in general do appear to be related to alienation. Schmied (1989) correlates the loss of control over *time* and the possibilities of life with the prevalence of reincarnation beliefs ('unofficial' though they may be) in late twentieth-century Europe and North America. Alienation has been defined as a state wherein 'the possibilities of life as a whole [are] reduced; the totality of life's accomplishments is used to realize a certain type of activity, namely the sale of one's labor power' (Lohmann 1980, quoted in Habermas 1984). The isolation of the individual from the full range of life possibilities, and the reification of lifetime into labor-time, are for critics of modernity diagnostic of the modern condition (see Kellner 1989: 53–4). It is then not surprising that as 'techno-capitalism' has more thoroughly permeated Western societies, reincarnation beliefs have gained wider acceptance as attested by, *inter alia*, Gallup polls (Cranston and Williams 1984 12–15).[5]

From a different angle, the philosopher Helmuth Plessner (1957) argued that the secularization and rationalization of Western society are mirrored in a similar development in the understanding of temporality. Human time is no longer a mythic or sacred time, a time endowed with meaning by the collective destiny of a group (*geschick* in Heidegger's terminology); Western time has become instead mere duration. Individual lives and deaths are unique and cannot be shared by others. A person's life derives its meaning from that unique death, and it is thus detached from any larger meaning: a point made most clearly by existential philosophers (Plessner 1957: 260). This differentiation of the individual, and the consequent loss of meaning that was offered by membership in a group possessing a collective destiny, such as the pre-Reformation Christian community,[6] has resulted in the modern condition. It is therefore significant that modern Western reincarnation beliefs emphasize the absolute individuality of rebirth, cut free from the moorings of even the broadest features of social identity. In tribal societies, however, social identity is generally continuous. In the Northwest Coast data, reincarnates are usually reborn into a socially identical position in society (Kan 1989: 67; Matlock 1990a; Mills 1988a, 1988b). The element

of identity that we have called 'persona' is the same in both incarnations. Identity and thus group solidarity is reinforced (see Dupire 1982). In cases where identity is discontinuous, the perceived tension may be resolved by adoption. If one looks at the broader context of eschatological and social structural data on traditional Northwest Coast societies, permanence and continuity of the *group* clearly prevail over flux and change. At the same time, there is in some sense a relativization of the *individuality* of the person, seen in beliefs in multiple souls, and multiple and irreconcilable beliefs concerning an afterlife.

In many tribal societies social identities and groups are reproduced (we might even say replicated) through means such as inheritance, naming, dance performances, and mortuary rites, as well as metempsychosis. This reproduction is, as I will argue, engendered in the larger relationship between the bounded social group and its generative ground: other forms and stages of being, of both humans and nonhumans.

Reincarnation Beliefs on the Northwest Coast

Reincarnation is an important existential possibility. We can identify several specific contexts in which reincarnation in a broad sense may be said to exist, including but not limited to human-to-human rebirth. I will discuss Oowekeeno, Heiltsuk, and, to a lesser degree, Haisla beliefs about reincarnation in the larger context of eschatological beliefs and concepts of the person.

Human-to-Human Reincarnation

The Haisla believed that everyone eventually was reborn (Drucker 1950: 291). Among all the Upper North Wakashan groups, memory of a past life, and especially the possession of private knowledge, was proof of reincarnation. A Haisla boy was said to be the reincarnation of a dead uncle on the evidence that he found gambling sticks that had been hidden by the mother's brother: 'A woman had a child who, as soon as he could speak, kept saying, "I had a set of gambling sticks hidden. Let's go and get my gambling outfit." Finally the mother went with him and he took them from a hollow in the roots of a tree. The sticks were recognized as belonging to her brother, who had died years before. The child was the brother reborn' (Olson 1940: 181–2). The reincarnation

from mother's brother to sister's son describes the most important path of inheritance in a matrilineal society such as the Haisla. Names, property (indeed, those very gambling sticks, had they not been hidden), and status generally pass down in this manner. Thus, recognition of reincarnation reinforces the social identity of the young boy, whose future life will be determined by the many things he inherits from his uncle.

An apparent corollary to this mode of recognition, at least among the Heiltsuk, is precocity, especially in speech. Precocious speech and private knowledge combine to place the child in a special position, one similar to adults. This paradoxical condition is resolved by the assignment of the accepted status of a reincarnated person, whose names, offices, and privileges will follow those of the predecessor.

Dreams are an important means of predicting and recognizing reincarnation. Among the Haisla, prospective fathers dreamed of a dead person. When the child was born, he or she was considered to be the reincarnation of that person and was given the same name, provided the infant was of the appropriate sex (Olson 1940: 181). Among the Oowekeeno dead kinsmen appeared in two types of dreams. In one type the deceased beckoned the dreamer to follow him; if the dreamer did so, he would sicken and perhaps die. In a second type of dream, which appeared only to women, a dead kinsman held out an infant. If the woman accepted it, the kinsman would be reincarnated. The reincarnated child would be the same sex, and hold the same names, as the relative appearing in the dream (Olson 1935, vol. 2: 1–2).

Alternatively, a dying person may prophesy his or her own rebirth into his family (see Stevenson 1975b). For the Heiltsuk, deathbed prophecies of rebirth into the dying one's own family set the stage for further evidence of reincarnation, once the presumptive reincarnate is born. Such evidence includes scars and other physical signs, as well as precocious behaviour, especially the early acquisition of language. The reincarnated child is thought to be aware of his or her own previous life and thus possesses private knowledge.

Among the matrilineal groups of the northern coast (from the Haisla northward) reincarnation was virtually always within the lineage or clan (Olson 1940: 181; Kan 1989: 42; Mills 1988a, 1988b). A preference seems to have existed for reincarnation to follow normal lines of succession, for example, mother's brother to sister's son or grandfather to grandson (Lopatin 1945: 62). The reincarnate would be the same sex as the predecessor, presumably because men's and women's statuses were separate

(Drucker 1950: 291). Indeed, the gender criterion appears to be invariable among the Upper-North-Wakashan-speaking groups (Olson 1949, vol. 3: 1).

Among the cognatic groups, the Heiltsuk and Oowekeeno, reincarnation was generally within the same 'family.' In the traditional context this would imply clan membership, with the exception of a few extraordinary cases of adoption into different clans. However, the pattern of succession and inheritance was more variable among these groups; similarly, statements about the kinship relationship between deceased and reincarnate are less prescriptive. Indeed, the possibility of reincarnation into an unrelated family was evidently admitted by the Oowekeeno. If a child physically resembled a child who had died, the dead child's parents would adopt him or her (Olson 1949, vol. 3: 25).[7]

As a general rule, I hypothesize a correlation between unilineal descent and the determinacy of reincarnation patterns. In lineal societies reincarnation is completely predetermined by lineal kinship. Among the matrilineal societies of the northern Northwest Coast, reincarnation appears to be closely tied to lineal succession, while among the cognatic groups it is more flexibly a function of kinship.[8]

The modes of recognition in human-to-human reincarnation ensure that the relationship between deceased and reincarnate will be, if not always genealogically predetermined, nevertheless close both socially and temporally. The use of an inappropriate vocative kin term by a child, for example, 'daughter' referring to a mother, ensures that the predecessor will usually be no more than four generations removed and will be lineally related.[9] Similarly, the appearance of a physical mark or the possession of private knowledge or personal characteristics that link a reincarnate to a predecessor ensure that the predecessor will have been socially close and familiar to the parents or other relatives of the child. Even annunciational dreams involve recognizable, and thus remembered, kinsmen. Human-to-human reincarnation is clearly different from the Western beliefs about reincarnation. The social proximity of reincarnate and ancestor strengthens group solidarity and reinforces, not relativizes, social identity.

Human-Animal Metempsychosis: Twins

Another important mode of metempsychosis involves the transformation between human and animal. The most determinate case among the Heiltsuk and Oowekeeno is that of twins, who were thought to be the

reincarnation of salmon, and thus to control the fertility of salmon as well as weather factors related to the success of salmon catches. Like the more famous Nuer case involving birds, there was a belief that twins 'are' salmon (Olson 1935, vol. 2: 9–10; Evans-Pritchard 1956: 80). A Heiltsuk myth describes a twin's death resulting from the death of a salmon; an eagle catches the salmon and devours its heart (Boas 1932a: 54; see Hultkrantz 1953: 333). Because twins really are salmon, in a substantive sense, they are less strongly attached to their human existence and are destined to die young, often in infancy, perhaps reflecting the truncated, two- or three-year life cycle of the salmon (Olson 1949, vol. 4: 102; see Evans-Pritchard 1956: 129–30).

Among the Oowekeeno twins were even identified with individual species of salmon: spring (or chinook) (*Onchorhynchus keta*) and sockeye (*O. nerka*) (Olson 1949, vol. 4: 102). *Which* species a twin had been was known when the child began speaking, presumably because the child would retain memories of the previous life (Olson 1949, vol. 4: 102). Although it is reasonable to ask why these particular species were singled out, no definite data on the question exist. The two species are taxonomically and morphologically quite different (Healey 1991: 313). However, there is a marked similarity in the ecology of the two species. Unlike other salmon, individual populations of chinook and sockeye may remain in fresh water for most or all of the life cycle (Burgner 1991: 3; Healey 1991: 313–14). One can only speculate that this fact may have contributed to the concept of salmon living in settled aquatic 'villages,' much like those of humans.

One of Olson's Oowekeeno informants took the equation of twins and salmon to its logical conclusion. He reported that he had known a Cape Mudge (Kwakiutl) man, a twin, who remembered having been a salmon in a previous life. This man, while fishing, recalled having been caught at the same place during his previous life. He even recalled being 'cooked, canned, and shipped far away' (Olson 1949, vol. 4: 102)! This extension of human-salmon metempsychosis into the modern world of commercial fishing and canning reveals the logical and moral force of the underlying principle.[10]

Twins, being marvelously doubled persons, were in a sense only half human, the other half being *náwálakv* ('supernatural' power) (Olson 1949, vol. 4: 102).[11] This tells us something about both *náwálakv* and metempsychosis. *Náwálakv* was both dangerous and useful, as were twins. Not only did twins typically die young, but they could bring serious misfortune upon their family and village. Thus, 'people dreaded

having twins' (Olson 1949, vol. 4: 102). But, like other dangerous beings, such as shamans, twins could put their powers to positive uses, in particular, healing.

Because of the danger involved, women who gave birth to twins were forced to undergo a period of isolation and taboo similar to that endured by widows and dance initiands (see below). This liminal phase of isolation was a means of managing contact with the supernatural, of integrating into human society those who have had such contact. The basic identity of *náwálakv* is transformation, especially between human and non-human worlds. Transformations, such as living to dead, human to animal, human to spirit, and their reversals are the root of supernatural power. Twins are a particularly evident and consensual example of such transformation. It is significant that twins were reincarnations of *salmon*. All species of salmon undergo remarkable transformations of appearance at different stages of the life cycle, including coloration and body shape. The transformations are great enough to make the salmon appear almost as different species (Burgner 1991: 3–5). The life history of salmon provides a natural basis for the schema of transformation (McLaren 1978). While all life forms are subject to this schema, twins are a case *par excellence*.

Human-Animal Metempsychosis: Totemism

A separate type of case involves the metempsychosis of a human being as a totemic animal. Thus, a member of a killer-whale clan may become a killer whale at death. This transformation may occur either at the moment of death or during the funeral (Olson 1954: 235).[12] It is not clear whether this process involves rebirth or is, as appears more likely, an instantaneous transformation or infusion of spiritual essence (Olson 1940: 180).

Related Phenomena

Finally, there are certain beliefs and practices on the Northwest Coast that would be not be considered reincarnation by many analysts of the phenomenon in Western cultures, and would be termed instead 'commemoration' or 'instantiation.' One type, discussed by Mauss, involved participants in the potlatch as reincarnations of founding ancestors (Mauss 1985).[13] In a striking variation on this theme, a memorial potlatch cannot begin until the deceased in whose honour it is given

makes an appearance. Contemporary Heiltsuk speak of this masked figure as an incarnation of the deceased. Interestingly, his appearance marks the transition from the explicitly commemorative and mournful phase of the potlatch to the more celebratory.

In addition to these beliefs, there is a system of beliefs involving both ghosts and an underworld. The underworld may be seen as a stopping-off point on the way to a rebirth or, in the gloomier Oowekeeno view, as a stratified Hades, in which shades sink over time to ever darker levels (Olson 1935, vol. 1: 52).[14] In all the Northwest Coast peoples' belief systems, certain constants remain: the land of the dead is, at least initially, a village like those of the living. Many basic terms, however, such as day and night, summer and winter, are reversed. There is no attempt to reconcile these various beliefs; they remain unsystematic and indeterminate.

Hultkrantz (1953) and others have suggested the existence of dual souls, one becoming a ghost, the other entering the process of reincarnation or decay (see Kan 1989: 54). This underscores the notion that the individual person is a temporary conjuncture of forces, and is, in his or her unique individuality, a necessarily transient phenomenon. Reincarnation achieves the continuity of the group at the expense of the individual. However, the dual-soul hypothesis solves only one aspect of the problem. Various contradictory eschatological models remain. Hultkrantz himself recognizes the problem presented by Bella Coola data, in which several (presumably) mutually exclusive post-mortem models exist (Hultkrantz 1953: 32; McIlwraith 1948, vol. 1: 495). This lack of internal consistency was noted by Drucker's Kwakiutl informants (Drucker 1950: 291). Moreover, the dual-soul hypothesis appears to be at odds with Bella Coola and Kwakiutl data and with my own data for the Heiltsuk (Boas 1891, 1892; Drucker 1950: 291; Ford 1941: 220; Harkin 1990: 90; Matlock 1990a: 10). The Haida are said by Swanton clearly not to have a dual soul (Swanton 1905: 34; Hultkrantz 1953: 63).[15] The clearest counter example is provided by the Haisla. They believed in a single entity, *hziq̓*, which was both soul and ghost (Lopatin 1945: 62; Lincoln and Rath 1986, vol. 1: 211). The *hziq̓* was capable of taking and giving life. In the dangerous period shortly after death, the *hziq̓* might kill others by taking their souls. The *hziq̓* also might be reincarnated (Lopatin 1945: 62).

Likewise, for the Heiltsuk, life force (*pkvaí*) is not necessarily distinguished from ghost (*lúał*). During the perimortuary period the *pk̓vaí* leaves the body and remains close by it and, later, by the sacrificial fire.

At least during this liminal phase, the two concepts are not clearly separated. Perhaps the multiplex person is best viewed as the product of differing perspectives and contexts created in ritual processes. Thus, the Haisla *hziq'* is distinguished from the *hiligà*, an animating force located at the back of the neck of living persons, but only by context. The two are not different entities, but rather different stages of the process of life, death, and rebirth (Lopatin 1945: 61; Lincoln and Rath 1986, vol. 1: 124). Similarly, the Heiltsuk mortuary process involves the management of the process of transformation from living to dead, and the dangers that accompany it.

Masking and Memory

A central feature of Northwest Coast theories of the person is the belief in transformation. Reincarnation is but one type of transformation (see McLaren 1978). Clearly, the opposite movement, from alive to dead, is another such transformation (see Harkin 1990; Kan 1989). This theme of transformation between existential states is richly represented in the dances of the Winter Ceremonial.

Masking in the Heiltsuk Winter Ceremonial transformed the dancer and society itself from its normal state to an extraordinary one in which structures, rules, and roles were dialectically overturned in favor of antithetical ones.[16] During the *ćaíqa* series of dances, names and roles were forgotten and replaced by new ones, often obscene and violent, which threatened the normal social structure (Boas 1897; Drucker 1940).[17] Initiates into the dance societies were said to be dead by those remaining in the village. The dances they performed represented death, destruction, cannibalism, and other forces antithetical to the social order. After the *ćaíqa* performances were complete, initiates were 'healed' (*haílíka*) and eventually reintegrated into society in a new status.

A second dance series among the Heiltsuk, the *λúláx̌a*, involved the chiefly instantiation of ancestors and the spreading of heavenly blessing on the community. This blessing was mediated by the hereditary chiefs and was used to 'heal' (*haílíka*) society, just as the *ćaíqa* initiates were healed. Not surprisingly, it often closely followed the conclusion of the *ćaíqa*. Interestingly, the chiefly dancers were only partially masked. They wore frontlets which allowed the face to be visible, but which transformed the countenance. The dances themselves, rather than manifesting the wild, jerky movements of the *ćaíqa*, were regular and controlled, iconic of social control and structure, rather than chaos and antistructure.

Both dance series involved enactments of something akin to reincarnation. In the *ćaíqa* initiates were said to be dead; thus, their reappearance was a type of rebirth (see Hultkrantz 1979: 121–2). This motif of death and rebirth is underscored by themes of the dances themselves. The content of the dances referred to non-human realms whence souls of the dead come to be reborn; several dances, such as the *lúał*, or ghost dance, specifically represented the underworld and its denizens. In a broad sense, the dances of the *ćaíqa* represent relations with several 'anti-worlds,' including the 'land of the dead,' on which the continued existence of the society of the living was dependent. The inversion of the world that occurred at the time of the *ćaíqa*, around the solstice, was seen as analogous to the inversion that constituted the difference between human and non-human worlds (see Reid 1976).[18]

In form, the *ćaíqa* dances similarly represented rebirth. The relatively uncontrolled, erratic movements of the dances, especially the *hámáća*, or 'cannibal' dance, are like the uncontrolled movements of small children. Like children, the newly 'reborn' initiates gradually gained control and were reintegrated into society (see Walens 1981: 15). In the Coast Salish Spirit Dance this association is made explicit by referring to initiates as 'babies' whose lack of control signified their rebirth (Jilek 1982: 66).[19] The taking away of the initiates is clearly coded as death. The representation of the encounter, which constitutes the dance, and the subsequent 'taming' of the initiate represents the passage between worlds, and hence rebirth and socialization.

This interpretation is reinforced by the sexual symbolism of the *ćaíqa*. In addition to the bawdy names, a phallic 'cannibal pole' was specially erected, which protruded through the smoke hole in the dance house roof, and upon which the initiate climbed (Hunt 1933).[20] Also, the initiate spent a great deal of time impounded in a special chamber at the back of the dance house, until 'tamed' (if only temporarily) and allowed to emerge from the womb-like enclosure.

The *λúɬáx̌a*, by contrast, involved not rebirth but instantiation. The founding lineage and clan ancestors dwelling in an 'everywhen,' a transcendent ever-present realm, imparted their form upon the living chiefs, who in turn bestowed it upon the people. Eagle down, representing communication with the empyrean realm of ancestors and gods, was spread by the dancing chiefs. The gravity, dignity, and benevolence appropriate to an adult chief – not the impropriety, recklessness, and hazard of an unformed child – characterized the ethos of the *λúɬáx̌a*.

The two modes, rebirth and instantiation, are both essential to the

Northwest Coast construction of the person. As I have described elsewhere (1990), the person is an amalgam of animating force and persona, self and role, built upon the basic stuff of life. Birth, or rebirth, of the soul is dependent on the relationship between the world of living humans to other antithetical worlds.

These worlds include not only the human underworld, but realms of land animals and fish as well. The fundamental fact of existence is transformation from one to another. A meta-ecological model of biota in which a limited supply of animating energy is available (a metaphysical version of the Second Law of Thermodynamics) implies that each form and stage of life is dependent upon the others, and that they are connected in cycles of death and rebirth (Goldman 1975: 3; Walens 1981: 17). The realms of animals, like the land of the dead, are seen to be inversions of the land of living humans; contrariwise, the land of living humans is identical to the animals' underworld (Boas 1932a: 143; Olson 1935, vol. 3: 4).

This can be seen in the case of salmon and twins. Because twins are closely connected with the realm of salmon, they are dangerous and are circumscribed by taboo. Mothers of twins must submit to a regimen of isolation called *hík̓ḷá*. This same regimen is undergone by mourning widows and those who have danced the *hámáċa*. This clearly implies a homology among these anti-worlds. Transformation between them is, paradoxically, a very dangerous operation upon which the existence of all life forms depends.

Transformation is a general condition, of which metempsychosis is an instance. The life-force of a human is reborn into the land of the dead or into an animal realm: a process which takes ten months, the conventional period of gestation (Harkin 1990). Masking represents, in the strong sense of making present, this process. It constitutes a special type of 'memory': an expanded temporal awareness capable of reaching both forward and backward in time (to the extent that we may use such linear terms at all), which apprehends the conditions of human existence. The threatening character of the *ċaíqa* dances reflects the ambivalence of this state of affairs, in which birth in one species is equivalent to death in another. The *hámáċa*, for instance, is a manifestation of the principle of predation interconnecting the living beings of all species, a metaphor for these larger conditions of existence (Walens 1981: 96).

If masking in the *ċaíqa* effects a transformation akin to rebirth, semi-masking in the *λúláx̌a* effects the instantiation that is a necessary component of becoming a full member of the community. Persons are

shaped and formed; the persona in Mauss's sense of role requires the stamp of culture. Among the Tlingit, as well as other Northwest Coast groups, this process alters the body itself (Kan 1989: 89). Interestingly, for the Tlingit the memory of reincarnation disappears when this process of formation is complete (Kan 1989: 110).

What is the mechanism for this formation? Mauss, while exaggerating the static quality of Heiltsuk society, nevertheless correctly recognized that social roles derived from social structure and that social structure was in turn idealized as a permanent and eternal organization of social and natural forces (Mauss 1985). For this reason, it is necessary that a living actor fill a presupposed role betokened by the title name.

The title name is one of a permanent and limited set which constitutes the *dramatis personae* of the tribe. The living occupant of the name is considered in some sense to be the *reincarnation* of the founding ancestor and original mythical bearer (Mauss 1985; Allen 1985). An individual would hold several such title names during his career, thus necessitating multiple relationships of 'reincarnation.'

Clearly this sense of 'reincarnation' is distinct from that described above, in which the soul actually transmigrates. Mauss' picture of Northwest Coast society was incomplete; in his view the living actors were little more than automatons. And yet we see in the Heiltsuk data that there is a sense in which the chief does 'reincarnate' the ancestor. During the *λúláχa* and indeed in any formal situation (for example, the 'potlatch') a chief's 'social value' (in a sense analogous to the linguistic value of the sign) is a function of his instantiation of the ancestor.

The space a chief inhabits is permeated with the actions of the ancestor. Houses were named to commemorate the places where ancestors descended to earth. These events are embodied in totemic art that 'decorates' the house. The interior space was subdivided into compartments that precisely marked the status of the occupant. Strikingly, the houses were constructed to represent the body of the mythical ancestor; to enter a house was to enter a mouth and be consumed. When a house member died, he or she was removed via a specially constructed hole in the rear that clearly represented the final stage of digestion (Olson 1940: 182). House members were impressed with the form of the ancestor and group. The group itself was predicated on a relationship between permanence and flux, out of which a human temporality is constructed (see Leach 1961).

The radical disjunction of death is embedded in the conjunction of mythical ancestor and living office-holder. Thus, the reincarnated soul

is generally to be found in the same lineage, indeed holding the same name, as the predecessor (see Matlock 1990a). What further mediates these two conditions is the quality of memory. The memory of ancestors and their deeds is the *sine qua non* of office and even of group membership.

On the level of the self (*moi* in Mauss' terminology) memory is also crucial. The soul is defined by a contemporary Heiltsuk consultant as synonymous with memory: 'Talk about our lives ... if you don't understand anything, when you're sick, some people say your life – mind's – going, moving away now. That's *pḵvaí* ... [Hey! Our life itself is our soul]. See, if I'm too sick I don't care about anything, and my mind's going away. I forget everything. I don't care about anything when my *pḵvaí* is going' (Mrs Esther Lawson; translation in brackets by author). When one 'forgets oneself' one dies. (It is interesting that one can only fully understand the nature of living persons in reference to death.) Similarly the act of remembering the dead, remembering ancestors, paradoxically ensures their continued life. The existence of the house, lineage, or clan can only be maintained by the consciousness of the living. This memory is a duty to mythical ancestors and other predecessors.

The commemorative events of the potlatch, the mortuary rite, and the *λúlάx̌a* are obvious modes of commemoration connecting the living and dead.[21] Less obvious a commemoration is the *c̓aíqa*, in which it is not the ancestors and predecessors of the group who are remembered, but rather the forms and stages of life (including death) that make possible human existence, as opposed to human society. To remember is also to 'care,' in the Heideggerean sense of being conscious of being (Heidegger 1962: 244). For Northwest Coast Indians the being of other life forms (and forms of what would appear, from a naive, species-centric perspective, to be non-life) is implicated in their own being.

Conclusion: Time and the Person

In Northwest Coast societies, we see that the *person*, as a culturally constituted being, is a matrix of elements drawn from the natural and social world and thus a microcosm of that world. Self (*moi*) and role (*personnage*) are, Mauss notwithstanding, equally necessary components of the person. Self is strongly identified with the soul or life-force, while role or persona is a function of the title name. In Northwest Coast thought, these two components are continually interrelated. Each

element is connected to larger forces. An individual is an empowered subject, a *person*, by virtue of participating in the permanent forces that define the life-world. As these forces are permanent, the person always participates in a temporality that transcends the limited time-span of the individual life.

At the same time, the individual life is, in a sense, a microcosm of this larger framework. The conditions of being intersect with the ordering principles of human social life.[22] Rebirth and instantiation are the necessary and sufficient conditions of personhood. Reincarnation, in the sense of a specific transmigration of the soul of a deceased human to a living one, is only one piece of this picture, albeit a crucial one.

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Notes

1 This analysis is based on data from scholarly and popular literature, as well as limited interviews with middle-class Americans claiming to believe in reincarnation. Undoubtedly, individual Americans hold beliefs different from those described here. However, my model should be seen as applying to the dominant conception of reincarnation, which flows from the hegemonic conception of the person in Western culture.

2 I do not mean to imply that reincarnation beliefs in Western and non-Western cultures are unrelated. Clearly, they deal with some existential dilemmas faced in common by all humans. However, it is important that we not simply extend implicit Western models of the person to other cultures.

3 This is of course true regardless of whether the method is scholarly or occult by our conception.

4 Roland Barthes terms this quality of narrative about the past 'the reality effect' (Barthes 1986).

5 This phenomenon may be seen as related to the increased interest in genealogy in the wake of *Roots*, as well as to other aspects of 'new age' ideology: all of which, among other things, extend human consciousness and agency beyond the bounds of a human lifetime.

6 Plessner, who was persecuted by the Nazis, sees failed modern attempts to recapture this collective destiny in Marxism, philosophical evolutionism, and Nazism (Plessner 1957: 244).

7 Olson does not specifically mention reincarnation in this example but, given the ideology concerning physical appearance, reincarnation is implicit.

8 The major difference between the unilineal systems of the Northwest Coast peoples and those of West Africa is of course that the latter extend the lineage backward in time in the mode of 'ancestor worship.' Among the Northwest Coast cultures, only mythical founding ancestors, the recently deceased, and a few extraordinary figures are specifically remembered.

9 In Heiltsuk, the maximum span of generations that can be expressed by a single, unique kin term is three, in the 'great-grandparent' terms. At the risk of appearing positivistic, one obvious explanation for inappropriate reference is the problem of reciprocal kin terms. In Heiltsuk, for example, the reciprocal terms for 'same-sex sibling' are identical, while those for 'mother' and 'daughter' are not. The importance of vocatives in the reincarnation complex is evident in the fact that a reincarnate is addressed by the kin term appropriate to the predecessor; thus, a child may be called 'grandmother' by older kinsmen (Olson 1935, vol. 1: 68).

10 The evident humour of this ethnographic anecdote does not detract from its serious meaning. In my experience, the famous 'Northwest Coast sense of humour' often deals with serious matters. The Comaroffs (1991: 35) elegantly phrase the issue for the Tswana of South Africa, 'who spoke of their history with their bodies and their homes, in their puns, jokes, and irreverencies.'

11 The familiar term 'supernatural' is used with reservations, as it implies a division between a scientifically knowable 'nature' and a residual category of magic, mysticism, and religion. The life-world of the Heiltsuk and other Northwest Coast cultures did not contain such a division.

12 The moment of death is defined by the Heiltsuk as the point when the soul or life-force leaves the body; physical existence may continue after this point (see Harkin 1990).

13 For Mauss and Davy, virtually any public occasion was considered a 'potlatch,' including masked and semimasked dances, which I discuss separately.

14 This belief is also attributed to the Heiltsuk (Crosby 1914: 104).
15 In the space of two pages, Hultkrantz avers that Northwest Coast cultures do possess a dual-soul belief and 'the soul belief of these peoples has not yet been fully expounded, but it probably contained dualistic conceptions' (Hultkrantz 1953: 63–4). Hultkrantz relies heavily on deductive methods, to put it mildly.
16 As the late Victor Turner noted in one of his last writings, rites of passage can transform groups as well as individuals (Turner 1987).
17 Names during the *ċaíqa* were unspeakable during the rest of the year, and were often obscene. Although some of these dances and related practices are performed today, I use the past tense to indicate that I am speaking of traditional Heiltsuk culture.
18 By extension of this logic, the world of animals existed in its secular state while humans were dancing the *ċaíqa*.
19 It may be argued that the *hámáċa* initiate is really in a state of divine madness, not rebirth, as he is obviously possessed by the spirit of the monster Báx̌bakválanusiwa. However, if we consider that the monster himself represents the negative existential pole (by doing to humans what humans routinely do to other species, namely, eating them), we can see that the *hámáċa* is in some sense a representation of human death and rebirth (see Walens 1981: 34–5,157; Shore 1989).
20 For the Oowekeeno, all *ċaíqa* names referred specifically to sexual organs of the opposite sex (Olson 1935, vol. 1: 47).
21 For the important commemorative function of the potlatch, see Kan (1989) and Wike (1952).
22 These ordering principles have their parallels in other life forms. Salmon, the dead, killer whales, and all land animals are organized into societies analogous to human ones.

ANTONIA MILLS

13 Rebirth and Identity: Three Gitksan Cases of Pierced-Ear Birthmarks

ABSTRACT. The chapter explores the concept of identity and self among the Gitksan Indians in relation to pierced-ear birthmarks that are considered signs of being a high chief or warrior reborn. The Gitksan phenomenon is positioned in the context of the ethnographic reports of other instances of ceremonially piercing a person's ears and of babies being born with congenitally marked ears. This complex occurred outside the Northwest Coast, but is particularly significant there. Three Gitksan cases of children born with marked ears are described, including the additional reasons these three are thought to be a particular person reborn. The cases give a sample of how birthmarks contribute to the sense of identity as including previous lives among the Gitksan. The chapter closes by raising, if not answering, the question of whether such cases present evidence not currently explained by Western models of the influence of genetics and environment.

> Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.
>
> John 4:48

Concepts of identity, individuality, and the self are important to psychologists (see Erikson 1959), to philosophers (see Perry 1975), to scholars in religious studies (see Collins 1982), as well as to anthropologists (see Kondo 1990, Marsella, DeVos, and Hsu 1985, Mauss 1938, 1985, Shweder and Bourne 1991).

Within each of these disciplines there are varying opinions about what constitutes a human being, and about the forces that influence and create the differences observable between human beings. Since the inception of Western civilization, philosophers have wrestled with the

question of whether humans are constituted with a dual nature of body and mind/soul, and debated whether, if souls exist, they appear once in human beings or are recycled, as Plato taught. Since the Enlightenment, Western philosophers such as Hume have emphasized what they portray as logical inconsistencies or impossibilities of a person being the same if the mind of *A* appears in body *B* (see Perry on Hume, and Hume in Perry 1975). In this sense of identity, where $A = A \neq B$, reincarnation becomes an absurdity.

Western psychology has for the most part, with the exception of Jung, not considered the concept of soul or of reincarnation of a soul in addressing what constitutes a human being. Western psychology typically posits that a person's individuality is the product of the interplay of environment and heredity, an approach which creates the concept that each human being is a unique product of the chance combination of maternal and paternal genetic codes, interacting with his or her prenatal and postnatal environment.

Anthropologists, among them Mauss (1938), have noted that most non-Western tribal peoples conceive of a human in a quite different way, as a being embedded in a kinship system that extends beyond bodily death. Many tribal peoples in North America and on other continents view an individual as an entity formed from substance provided both by the mother and the father, but also influenced by, animated by, and/or guarded by one or a series of deceased ancestors and other entities existing on a spirit realm; in short, most humans have viewed a human as a being animated by one or more souls. Nonetheless, few anthropologists have addressed the question of what a person's sense of identity, sense of self, is like in the numerous cultures that have an implicit belief in reincarnation.

In this chapter I describe the ethnographic literature relating to the practice of intentionally marking persons by ear-piercing and to reports of babies being born with congenitally marked ears. Next, I describe three Gitksan cases in which a baby was born with pits or depressions in the ears which were said to correspond to pierced-ear marks in a previous life. In two of the cases the child was said to be the reincarnation of a chief who had had his ears ceremonially pierced in his youth. In the third case the child was said to be the reincarnation of someone who may have been born with pits or depressions resembling pierced ear holes, and/or of that relative and a previous, unidentified warrior. I consider how these signs are used in this status-conscious matrilineal society in the construction and interpretation of 'individual identity.'

Finally, I address the difficult question of whether the birthmarks constitute evidence that human beings are impacted by their ancestors in ways Western psychology has not addressed.

Signs of Being Reborn

The Gitksan, a Northwest Coast people, use similar indices as evidence that a person has been reborn as the neighbouring Wet'suwet'en and the Subarctic Beaver (Mills 1988a, 1988b). The data indicate that the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en watch for and are particularly interested in the reincarnation of their high chiefs in their matrilines, while this is irrelevant for the Beaver Indians.[1]

The Gitksan say that in the past they would offer a series of war clubs to a child thought to be a particular high chief reborn. The purpose was to see if the child could pick out the club which had belonged to the deceased high chief. This was a test similar to those administered to young candidates for the position of a Tibetan lama or *tulku* reborn (Dalai Lama 1962; Harrer 1954; MacKenzie 1988). Today such formal tests are not practised by the Gitksan, but the families of young children continue to watch for other signs by which they identify a child as a particular person reborn.

Pre-mortem wishes, announcing dreams (dreams of the deceased returning), and apparitions of the deceased are interpreted as signalling an impending rebirth. Once a baby is born, birthmarks corresponding to marks on the previous personality are also noted (sometimes, in conjunction with the expressed wish of the deceased, announcing dreams or apparitions of the late relative). As a child matures, behavioural traits reminiscent of a deceased family member, such as precocious skills, affinities, and phobias are noted, as well as apparent recognition of objects, places, and people which were familiar to the previous personality. In some instances *halait* (Gitksan shamans) diagnose an infant's illness in terms of the previous personality's desire to be recognized for who he or she now is.

However, birthmarks are the most tangible sign of previous life identity. 'They have to have the signs [birthmarks] so we can know them when they come back,' an elderly Gitksan woman said. Striking correspondences between scars, lesions, or wounds on a previous personality and birthmarks on the newborn child are typically considered important evidence that someone has been reborn. Birthmarks which are used to identify a baby with a particular previous personality

among the Gitksan relate to both fatal and non-fatal injuries and to intentionally made marks. Some surgical incisions and some wounds or scars from accidents (both fatal and less serious) are said to manifest themselves as birthmarks.

As I said before, the Gitksan watch particularly for the rebirth of their high chiefs. Some Gitksan are 'in a hurry to come back': in some cases the interval between death and reported rebirth is less than nine months, although the mean interval for twenty-two Gitksan cases is sixteen months.

The high chiefs are typically elderly at the time of death and die of what Western medical authorities call natural causes, such as cardiac arrest, which do not leave marks or wounds that manifest themselves as birthmarks. The Gitksan also expect birthmarks, like memories, to be attenuated by a long period during which an individual is living in an afterlife abode. In fact, there tends to be an inverse relationship between the length of intermission between lives and the presence of birthmarks, and between non-violent means of death and birthmarks.[2]

The cases reported in this paper are an exception to these general rules: in the case of Alan Webster, the interval between the death of the person he is said to be and his birth is ten years; in the case of Jeremy Holder, the interval is thirty-five years. In the case of Edward Taylor, in which the interval is fourteen months, the pierced-ear marks are thought to be related to an unidentified ancestor who died long ago. There is something special about cases of pierced-ear birthmarks.[3]

Ceremonial Ear-Piercing among the Gitksan and Other Indians

Ear-piercing is certainly not restricted to the Northwest Coast or even to the American continents. Regarding North American Indians and ear-piercing, Chamberlin (1907: 16–17) says,

> The motive of personal adornment, aside from the desire to appear attractive, seems to have been to mark individual, tribal or ceremonial distinction ... Ear ornaments were a mark of family thrift, wealth, or distinction, and indicated honor shown to the wearer by his kindred. *Ceremonies, occasionally religious in character, some of which seem to relate to sacrificial rites, usually attended the boring of the ear. Each perforation cost the parent of the child or the kindred of the adult gifts of a standard value, and sometimes these perforations extended around the entire rim of the ear.* (Article on Adornment written by Alexander Chamberlin; emphasis added by this author.)

The article has an illustration of an ear pierced with nine regularly spaced holes from the top of the outer rim down towards the lobe, with an additional hole in the lobe of the ear. The caption identifies the illustration as 'Seminole Ear Ornaments.'

Among North American Indians, ear-piercing has also been noted in conjunction with reincarnation among the Delaware, Lakota Sioux, and Omaha. Like the Northwest Coast societies, these societies had ceremonial bestowals of names, which may have been done in conjunction with the piercing of the ears. Kinietz (1946: 120) reported that a Delaware Indian, 'Thinks that he lived on the earth in "the olden time," from the circumstance of his being born with his ears bored. He thinks also, that if his spirit should go to Heaven, after death, he may be restored to life.' Charlotte Ortiz, a Lakota Elder, told me that she had heard of babies being born with pierced ears. 'They say they are comebacks.'[4] However, ear-piercing in a ceremonial context was perhaps most widely or at least most recently practised by various Northwest Coast Indian groups. Curtis (1913: 89–90) reported it for the Coast Salish (Clallam, Twana, and tribes of Puget Sound): 'Death occurs in the spirit land, though rarely, and the spirit then passes on to a land somewhere beyond, whence it returns to earth, reincarnated in a newborn infant. This is the explanation offered for the strong resemblance a child may bear to a grandparent or other relative long deceased. *A baby's ears often show dimples resembling the healed perforations in ears once pierced for pendants, and such an infant is believed to be the reincarnation of a long dead child of some wealthy chief.*' (emphasis added by this author).

McIlwraith (1948: 616) says of the Salishan-speaking Bella Coola, 'As already mentioned, if a new-born infant is a reincarnation, the fact can often be recognized by holes or dimples in the ears, relics of previous borings for rings. Unless such a birth has been foretold in a dream, it is impossible to learn whom the child re-embodies.'

Olson (1940: 181–2) describes belief in reincarnation among the Haisla, the most northern Wakashan-speaking Indians, and of ear-piercing says, 'The ears are pierced. Commoners usually have but one hole in each, but for nobles three or four holes in each ear is common; for the highest nobles, five in each ear. The paternal uncle pierces a boy's ears, the maternal aunt a girl's ears' (ibid.: 199). Olson (1954: 226) noted that the Oweekeeno pierce the ears of infants at the age of three months.

In 1885 Krause (1885 [1956]: 210) was the first to report the linking of reincarnation and ear-piercing for the Haida (and the Tlingit): 'Just as

among the Tlingit, the idea of reincarnation is common among the Haida. After naming, a ceremony follows when the nose and ears are pierced and at both occasions gifts are distributed.'

Florence Edenshaw Davidson (Blackman 1982: 53), a titled Haida matron, reported having her ears pierced by her grandmother when she was four days old. Harrison (1925: 112–13), reporting on the Haida, links recognition of a child as the reincarnation of a deceased relative to the ceremonial piercing of the ears (and septum) in childhood:

> When the first-born son was born it was customary to name him after the mother's eldest brother, but should the mother be brotherless, the medicine man was consulted, and after he had consulted his spirits and taken about a week to think and dream over it, he announced that the child should receive the name of a deceased relative or friend of his on the mother's side, and with great rhetoric he demonstrated that the soul of this deceased person had again returned to the tribe in the person of the newly-born infant, therefore, as he was revisiting his own people for a second time or third time the child should, when he reached manhood, receive his former rank and precedence. The shaman having defined the soul of his mother's relative that had become reincarnated the child had to be named after this ancestor, and this was done with great ceremony in the presence of all the tribe. All were expected to give presents according to their rank to start the boy on his way through life ... *The next ceremony he had to undergo was the occasion of having the lobes of his ears and the septum of his nose pierced in order to be fully decorated on suitable occasions with bone or ivory ear-rings and nose-ring according to the custom of the warriors of his tribe.* During this ceremony a potlatch was made on his behalf by the uncle whom he was destined to succeed, and great rejoicing took place when the piercing was bravely and successfully accomplished. (Emphasis added by this author.)

Emmons (1991: 288) reported a Tlingit case of a child born with pierced ears quite analogous to the Gitksan cases reported below: 'A Mrs Clark of Wrangell, who is well versed in the beliefs of her people, says that a Tongass woman during pregnancy had dreams of her [maternal] aunt, a woman of high caste who had many perforations in the rims of her ears – a sign of her social standing. The child when born, had a number of scars and holes about the edges of the ears, which at once indicated that the spirit of the aunt had returned and entered the child. Mrs Clark saw these marks but attributed them to the constant thought of the aunt by the pregnant woman.'

De Laguna (1972: 779) noted ceremonial ear-piercing, and congenital pierced-ear marks for the Yukatat Tlingit: 'the first child is believed to be certainly the reincarnation of someone, if not of several persons, for she was born with a great deal of hair and also, it is alleged, with holes all around the lobe and helix of the ears. This is proof that "she's the spirit of the old people," for long ago the well-to-do would give potlatches to have a baby's ears so pierced.'

Ear-piercing ceremonies have been described for the Tsimshian as follows:

> Masks were worn by participants in Tsimshian ceremonies. Ceremonies featuring property distributions (potlatches) were held when *a child's ears were pierced,* when names, crests, or ceremonial prerogatives were transferred, when houses were built, and when totem poles were erected. The transfer of supernatural power from an adult to a child was the occasion of a major ceremony. The adult danced, sang the songs associated with his spirit protector, enticed him to it, and symbolically hurled it into the children who, with their mothers, were hidden under a mat in the corner of the house. Following the ceremonial transfer of a supernatural power, a person was eligible for initiation into secret societies. (Label on a Tsimshian mask at the American Museum of Natural History, New York, New York, revised in 1960–1 from labels of Franz Boas; emphasis added by this author.)[5]

The famous story of Asdiwal, collected by Boas (1912) from the Tsimshian, alludes to pierced ears. Mouse Woman says (Boas 1912: 131) to Potlatch-Giver (Asdiwal), 'take off your ear ornaments and throw them into the fire.'

Similarly, ear-piercing was practised by the Gitksan as a way of 'earmarking' children as heirs to the highest hereditary titles. This custom is of ancient origin and has continued until recent times. Mary McKenzie, Chief Gylogyet, of a Gitksan Wolf Clan matriline and Dora Wilson-Kenni, Chief Yaga'lahl, of another Wolf House, have described in their testimony for the Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en Land Claims Court Case, the potlatches in which they had their ears ritually pierced by someone from their father's clan and were given chiefly names (*Delgamuuk vs. the Queen* 1988: 4094–8). Chief Yaga'lahl was seven years old when her ears were pierced in the 1940s. In the past boys of chiefly families also had their ears pierced. Other hereditary chiefs have described to me that both male and female children who were expected to take high names often had their ears pierced in a succession of potlatches, thus 'ear-

Figure 1. Figurine (possibly Aleut) with pierced ears.
(Photograph in Alaska State Museum of object in St Petersburg Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography)

marking' them as significant heirs. The helix or upper portion might be perforated, although piercing of the lobe was also practised. This custom was discontinued for boys in the beginning of the twentieth century. However, being born with pierced ears was and is considered a sign of being a significant chief or warrior reborn among the Gitksan as among the Southern Coast Salish and the Bella Coola.

To date I have heard of six cases in which a Gitksan was said to have been born with at least one congenitally pierced ear mark. All these people are male. There are currently some 6,000 Gitksan Indians. However, it would be premature to conclude that one in every thousand

Gitksan is born with pierced-ear marks because I have not systematically sampled the population. More cases may emerge as the cases of reported reincarnation in a wider proportion of the population are recorded. Stevenson (in press) has described two Tsimshian cases of the reincarnation type with congenitally pierced ears. Here I report on three of the six Gitksan pierced-ear cases of which I am currently aware.

Three Case Reports

The Case of Jeremy Holder (pseudonym)

Jeremy Holder was born near Vancouver on 27 July 1979. His mother, Patricia Holder, née Webster, is a member of the Gitksan house of Maliskol of the Fireweed Clan. Jeremy's father, Rodney Holder, is non-Native. (See Genealogy Chart 1 for this and the following case.)

Identification of Jeremy as Joshua Pounder Reborn

On the eve of Jeremy's birth Margaret and Katherine, two elderly ladies in Kitsegukla, dreamed independently of each other that Joshua Pounder, their late classificatory 'brother' and 'step-brother,' respectively, had returned. Joshua Pounder was Chief *Hamowx* in the House of Maliskol. Later that day they learned that Patricia Holder, also a member of the house of Maliskol, had given birth to a baby boy near Vancouver. Jeremy is a member of this house, descent being matrilineal in the Gitksan society. Joshua was Jeremy's mother's mother's mother's mother's mother's sister's son; in Gitksan terms his classificatory grandfather.

On the basis of Jeremy's birth occurring just after the striking coincidence of Margaret's and Katherine's parallel dreams, they were quite convinced that Joshua had been reborn. Later, when they saw his congenital pierced-ear marks and observed his behaviour (reported below), they were doubly sure he was Joshua come back.

Investigation of the Case

I was told of the case in 1986 by Jeremy's uncle, Philip Webster, Jr. Between 1986 and 1990 I interviewed all of the relatives I could contact. I have yet to see the subject or his congenitally pierced ears. To date the case rests on the testimony of Jeremy's maternal grandmother Anne Webster, his great-grandmother Matilda Malcolm, his great-great aunt

Katherine, his great uncle Alex Malcolm, and his uncle Philip Webster, Jr. Interestingly, I have never been directed to interview any of Joshua Pounder's relatives in his wife's clan, nor have I, to date, questioned them about the case.

The Life and Ear-Piercing of Joshua Pounder

Joshua Pounder had been born in December 1865 and had died of natural causes in 1944 at the age of seventy-nine. At the time of his death, he held the second highest name in his house, *Hamowx*, the name that Matilda Malcolm, Jeremy's great-grandmother, held at the time of my investigation. Joshua Pounder had been an important figure in his house, in his territory, and in the village of Kitsegukla, and had married a member of another clan who also held an hereditary title. They were definitely members of Gitksan 'aristocracy.'

Matilda and Margaret recalled having seen the multiple pierced-ear marks in Joshua's ears. They had not attended the ceremonies in which Joshua's ears were pierced because they were born many years after Joshua's birth. Indeed, Matilda was not entirely sure if Joshua had been born with pierced ears or if his ears had been ritually pierced when he was a child, although she noted that it would have been entirely appropriate if Joshua had had his ears pierced as a child because he was born as an heir to the highest titles in the house (and held at his death the title Matilda now holds). However, Margaret, when I interviewed her at her home, was sure that Joshua had had his ears pierced in feasts as a child, because she had heard her parents talk about having put up money for the potlatches in which this was done. (I was unable to interview her 'sister' Margaret who had the same dream the same night because she had died in 1986, before I began investigation of the case.)

Among the Gitksan ear-piercing ceremonies were done on small children as well as on children up to the age of twelve. Therefore, Joshua Pounder presumably had his ears pierced some time between 1865 (the year he was born) and 1877.

As the numerous citations above from various Northwest Coast tribes attest, ear-piercing was an important ritual on the Northwest Coast associated with being recognized as an heir to a high title, or being someone reborn, or both. In addition, ear-piercing has a special significance for the house of Maliskol because the name of the house can be translated as 'pierced-ear.'[6]

Before his death Joshua told his 'sister' Katherine and 'step-sister'

Margaret that when he came back he was going to be a White man. His 'sister' Katherine had asked how they would know he had returned in that case, and he teasingly said, 'I'll punch you.'[7]

Reasons for Seeing Jeremy as Joshua 'Come-Back'

As I stated above, the case began with Margaret and Katherine both dreaming on the same night that their brother had returned, after he had been dead for thirty-five years. The next morning they told Jeremy's great-grandmother Matilda Malcolm who had spent the night in the same house with these ladies, about their dreams, as soon as all three of them were awake. Later that morning Matilda's daughter Anne Webster phoned Kitsegukla to let her mother know that Matilda's granddaughter Patricia had just given birth to a baby boy in a town near Vancouver. Joshua's sisters had not known that Patricia was expecting a child, although Matilda certainly did. However, the fact that the baby was born to a White father just after both sisters had the same dream made them quite sure that Jeremy was their 'brother' reborn. When they subsequently discovered that Jeremy had pierced-ear marks, they were doubly sure.

Matilda Malcolm was the first person to notice that the infant Jeremy had pierced-ear marks; this occurred during a visit to him near Vancouver at the time he was a few months old. Jeremy first came to Kitsegukla when he was a few months old. This was the first time Joshua's 'sisters' had an opportunity to observe the pierced-ear birthmarks in Jeremy's ears. They noted that the pierced-ear birthmarks corresponded to the marks on Joshua's ears. They were delighted to have their 'brother' returned.

Jeremy is reported to have been born with four (according to Philip Webster) or three (according to Matilda Malcolm) pierced-ear marks on the upper rim or pinna of his left ear and two (or three, according to Matilda) such marks on the pinna of his right ear.

Jeremy was about three years old when he next came to Kitsegukla. Judith Malcolm reported that 'Jeremy and his baby brother and Patricia were in the kitchen when Aunty Katherine came to the door early one morning, the summer that they were here. Usually Aunty Kay knocks and then she'll walk in and as soon as she opened the door Jeremy came to her and gave her a punch. Naturally Patricia was very upset about what Jeremy was doing to her. She was saying, "Don't do this to Granny," but Aunty Kay said, "Don't be upset, I have something to tell you." So she gathered us around the table and she told us what Joshua

Pounder had said to her before he passed on, the way they'll recognize him when he's back was that he was going to punch her. And that was exactly what Jeremy had done to her that morning. That was the first time he'd seen Aunty Kay.'

That same visit Jeremy's maternal grandmother Anne took him around the village, which he seemed to recognize. Anne said, 'He would look out the window here and he would indicate to me that he wanted to go down along the water's edge and he'd run along there. He knew a lot of places that I didn't know, but that's the ancient village so obviously he would know the areas that I wouldn't know ... There were different areas that he knew.' Anne said that when she took him to the graveyard, Jeremy said, 'I remember this place. I've been here before.' Anne added, 'But I noticed as he grew older the memory faded and I think that happens.'

Anne noted further that Jeremy also seemed completely at home with Joshua's 'sisters' Margaret and Katherine. As an expression of the closeness he felt towards one he called her 'grandmother' and her husband 'grandfather' the first time he saw them when he was three years old.

Joshua's 'sisters' baked Jeremy bread and fed him the old time traditional foods, such as dried fish, and Jeremy liked it immediately, although it was the first time (they thought) that he had had any. Jeremy's uncle, Philip Webster, Jr, noted that Joshua's sisters treated him like 'a little man.'

Anne noted that he seemed like a little man. From the time he was three years old, whenever she took him on trips with her, he would notice whenever she was lost and he would point out to her the correct road for her to take. Anne said that Jeremy seemed to embody a great deal of wisdom.

Jeremy's Identity as Joshua (in the Eyes of His Relatives)

Jeremy and his parents moved from the Vancouver area to the vicinity of Toronto and from there to Regina, Saskatchewan, and then back to Ontario. These moves, and Jeremy's father's ambivalence about his son's Indian heritage, have interfered with Jeremy's scheduled trips back to Kitsegukla. Jeremy has not been back to Kitsegukla for the past ten years, since he was four years old. However, his Gitksan grandmother and Tsimshian grandfather have visited him in eastern Canada. As I stated above, I have not yet seen him or his pierced-ear marks.

Anne says Jeremy's mother Patricia identifies herself strongly with

ear. On the basis of this mark, Alan's father, Philip, Jr, was sure that his son was his uncle Arthur 'come-back.' Further reasons for Philip's intense sense of connection with Arthur are described below. In addition, it was noticed a little later that Alan had deep marks on the back of both ears. Whether these marks related to Arthur or to an unidentified ancient warrior, remains ambiguous, as is explained below.

Investigation of the Case

I first learned of this case in 1986, and in 1986 and 1987 I interviewed Alan's father Philip Webster, Jr, his maternal grandmother Anne, his great-grandmother Matilda Malcolm, and his great- uncle Alex Malcolm. In the summer of 1989 I met Alan Webster and his great-aunt Beth Webster, with whom he lives near Campbell River, BC. I then interviewed his paternal grandfather and paternal great-grandmother, Harriet Webster, by telephone. In 1990 I once again spoke to all the relatives who had told me about the case in 1986 and 1987. The family gave me permission to gain access to the autopsy and police report regarding Arthur's death.

The Life, Ear-Snipping, and Death of Arthur Webster

Arthur Webster was born in Prince Rupert, BC, on 3 October 1948. He was the youngest of nine children and greatly fancied by Philip Webster, Sr, his eldest brother. It was much to Philip, Sr's chagrin that he inadvertently clipped Arthur's ear when giving him a haircut when Arthur was about four years old. Arthur's mother (who is also Philip, Sr's mother) described the incident by saying, 'Philip was just a teenager and he was just learning to cut hair when he made that slip.' The would-be barber was about sixteen or seventeen years old at the time. The sharp shears made a pronounced cut which eventually healed but left a distinct scar, according to Philip, Sr, and Arthur's mother, Harriet Webster. Philip, Jr, also clearly remembered the scar on his uncle's ear. The incident became a favourite family story. Arthur certainly did not hold any grudge about the snipped ear. He frequently stayed at his brother Philip's home in Prince Rupert. Arthur was only nine years older than his nephew Philip, Jr, and a great favourite of both Philip, Jr, and Philip, Sr.

Arthur Webster disappeared in July 1969, when he was twenty years old. When Arthur failed to report for the fishing boat on which he was scheduled to sail and could not be found after two days of searching, Philip, Sr, reported him missing to the police. As time went on Arthur's

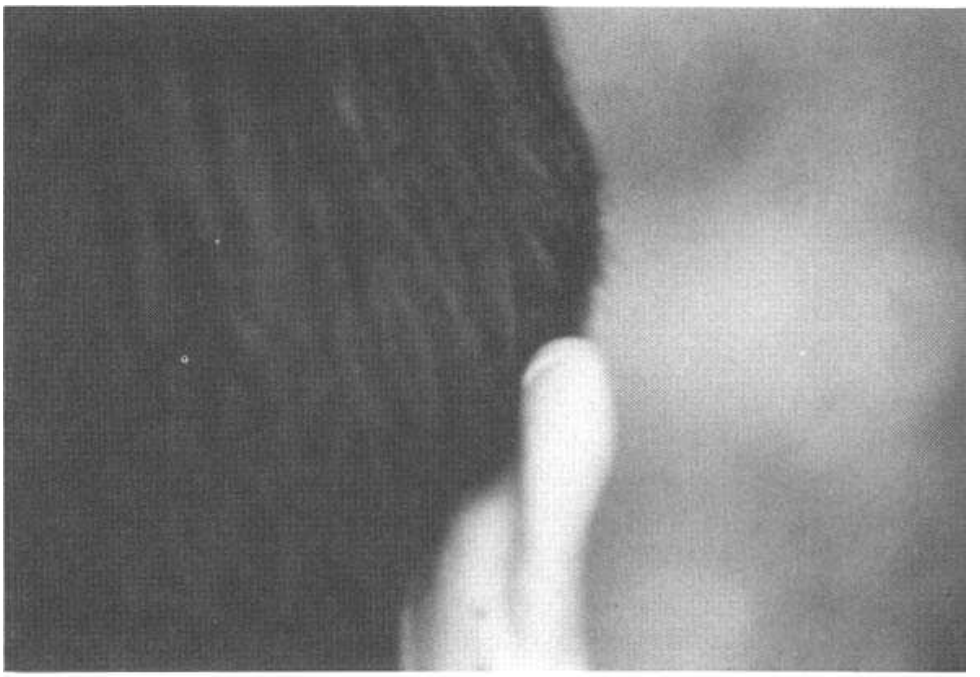

Figure 2. Birthmark resembling a scar on Alan Webster's right ear. (Photograph Antonia Mills)

family became increasingly alarmed about what might have happened to him. However, at first Philip, Jr, who was twelve years old at the time, was not told that there was any cause for concern. Before the family learned what had happened to Arthur, and before he knew there was cause for alarm, Philip Webster, Jr, Alan's future father, had experienced a number of apparitions of Arthur Webster, his father's youngest brother. Philip, Jr, reported them as evidence of the close connection between himself and his uncle and as an explanation for Arthur being born to him some ten years later.

The first of these incidents occurred during the two weeks before Arthur's body was found. Philip, Jr, answered the phone when it rang and heard Arthur ask if there had been any phone calls for him. At the time Philip, Jr, thought Arthur was still alive. Only later, after the autopsy report came in, did he understand that his uncle was already dead at the time of this call.

After the phone call, Philip, Jr, and his younger brother saw Arthur's legs, through their basement bedroom window, on a number of occasions. However, whenever they went to the door to greet him, he was not there. Finally the phone rang when Philip, Jr, and his father and

other people were in the kitchen. Philip, Jr, answered the phone, and he and the others in the room heard the sound of Arthur laughing over the phone. Arthur was said to have a very distinctive and characteristic laugh. However, no one was on the line when the phone was passed to Philip, Sr.

Some fifteen days after Arthur was reported missing, his body was found in a cove of the Prince Rupert harbour. The autopsy stated the cause of death as asphyxiation due to drowning approximately two weeks before the recovery of the body. A thorough police investigation did not provide any evidence of foul play, but Arthur's relatives suspected that his falling into the harbour was the result of a fight with the 'friends' (fellow Tsimshian) with whom he had last been seen. Arthur's death was deeply mourned by his family.

Reasons for Seeing Alan as Arthur, and/or a Warrior Come Back

The mark on Alan's ear, which looked like a scar and corresponded to the placement of the scar on Arthur's ear, was the first reason that Alan was seen as Arthur come back. As stated above, Alan's father thought that Arthur's phone calls after his death and the appearance of his legs were other signs that Arthur wanted to make his presence felt, or come back as Alan.

In addition, the baby Alan was eventually noted to have a number of marks on the backs of his ears. His grandmother Anne Webster remarked that they were deeply scarred. Alan's father had not mentioned to me that his son's ears had such pierced-ear marks when he first recounted the story of Alan's congenital scar on the ear (although he himself was born with one pierced-ear mark on the front of his right ear lobe, which he had pointed out to me).

Alan's grandfather Philip, Sr, said that he had not noted the marks on his grandson's ears until his mother-in-law Matilda Malcolm pointed them out to the family. Matilda, however, noted them the first time she inspected him, and she said that they showed that Alan had been a great warrior in the past. The marks resemble the pierced ear holes that were made in the ears of boys and girls who were heirs to the high chiefs' names, except that they do not go through to the front of the ear.

Philip Webster, Sr, did not know if his brother Arthur had been born with pierced ears and suggested that I contact his mother, Mrs Harriet Webster. I was able to contact her in Prince Rupert by telephone. She said that she recalled that one of her nine children had been born with pierced-ear marks. At the time she noted that that meant that the child

Figure 3. Congenital marks on the back of Alan Webster's left ear. (Photograph Antonia Mills)

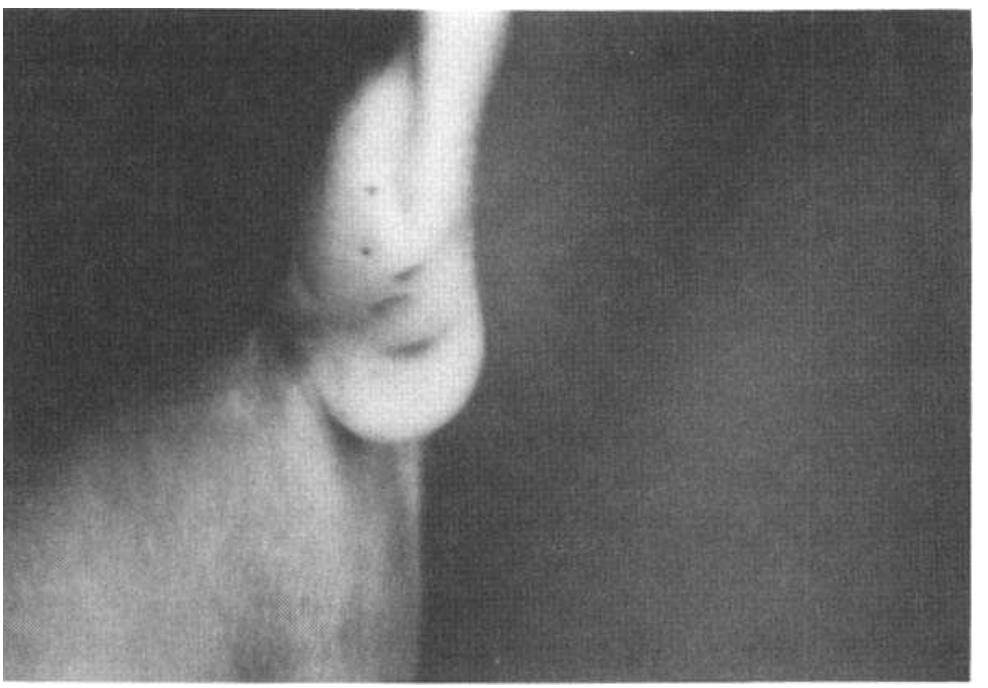

Figure 4. Congenital marks on the back of Alan Webster's right ear. (Photograph Antonia Mills)

was *baa'lx*, someone reborn, but she did not recollect any discussion about who that child might have been in a previous life. Nor could Mrs Webster remember which of her children had such marks. Three of her nine children have since died. I did not think to ask her if she could eventually check the ears of the remaining six of her children and see if they have pierced-ear marks on the backs of their ears as adults.

Arthur's autopsy does not note any marks on his ears (pathologists are seldom concerned with minor scars that are not relevant to the immediate cause of death), and it states that the body was decomposed due to the action of sea life during the fifteen days in which the body was submerged in salt water.

As noted above, Alan's great-grandmother Matilda has commented that the marks on Alan's ears indicate that Alan was a great warrior in the past. She is not referring to Alan's previous life as Arthur Webster, but to an anterior life, in which she presumed that he had had his ears pierced because he was to become (and/or perhaps because he had become) an important chief. This is reminiscent of McIlwraith's (1948: 616) comment concerning the Bella Coola, that if a newborn child is born with holes or dimples in the ears, 'Unless such a birth has been foretold in a dream, it is impossible to learn whom the child re-embodies.'

Alan's Identity as Arthur

Alan's parents separated when Alan was six months old. After their separation Alan remained in the custody of his father for his first six years. He then went to live with his father's mother's brother Peter Malcolm and Peter's wife Beth. Alan did not ever have clear memories of being Arthur or of being anyone else. However, Alan's father Philip, Jr, and Alan's great-aunt Beth both noted that Alan had a kind of wisdom about him, particularly regarding family matters. Beth Malcolm noted that Alan's adult manner might have been the result of being raised among adults, but she also noted that Alan was losing some of that quality as he grew older.

When I interviewed Alan he was ten years old. Alan said he accepted that he was Arthur, and he was somewhat concerned about the possibility that he (Alan as Arthur) had been murdered by his relatives. Out of Alan's hearing, Alan's great-aunt Beth reported that Alan used to express considerable fear that his life would again end in violence. Alan's family felt they had been careful not to alarm Alan by voicing their speculations about the cause of Arthur's death, but it is quite

possible that Alan had overheard his relatives voice their suspicions that Arthur had been deliberately murdered by his companions.[9]

Alan was officially adopted in the fall of 1989 into the same Frog house to which his uncle Peter Malcolm and another of his great aunts (his father's mother's sister) were adopted some years before. Alan's great-uncle Peter and one of his sisters, who by birth were members of the Fireweed house of Maliskol, were adopted into a Frog house because that house was dwindling seriously in numbers. Philip's paternal grandmother Anne was adopted some years ago into yet another Frog house 'to keep the names alive,' in her words. However, Matilda Malcolm specified that Anne's children (who were already born when this cross-clan adoption took place) should not leave the house of Maliskol. When Peter Malcolm gave the headstone feast to become the head chief of his adopted house in the autumn of 1989, Alan was officially adopted into his great-uncle Peter's house and given a child's name. This move both removes the problem of clan incest, implicit in his parent's marriage, and allows Alan to become his great-uncle Peter's heir to the position of head chief. Sister's sons are typically one's heirs in the Gitksan system. In this case the situation is unusual, as Alan is Peter Webster's sister's sons's son. Alan is, then, ear-marked to become a head chief.[10]

However, to Philip Webster, Sr, Alan's Tsimshian paternal grandfather, Alan is perceived less as the ancient warrior returned and more as the come-back of his cherished youngest brother. Philip Webster, Sr, makes a point of coming each summer to spend some time with Alan and to take him fishing. Although Beth and Philip Webster, Jr, see a diminution of the special adult quality that characterized Alan in his early years, Philip Wester, Sr, continues to be impressed by the similarity of the mannerisms and preferences of Alan and his late brother Arthur. There is no doubt in his mind that Alan is Arthur come back.

The Case of Edward Taylor

Edward Taylor was born on 26 November 1973 in Prince George, BC. He is the son of Alice Franklin Taylor, a member of a Wolf Clan house in Kispiox, BC, and Wilbur Taylor, a non-native who was the local band manager.

Identification of Edward Taylor as Patrick Carter Reborn

Even before Edward Taylor was born there was reason to suspect that Patrick Carter would, as the Gitksan put it, 'come back in' him. Accord-

ing to Edward's family, Patrick Carter had said he wanted to be reborn to Alice. After Edward's birth his great-grandmother noticed that he had two small indentations on the helix or upper portion of each ear at the place where some Gitksan men formerly wore earrings.

Patrick Carter apparently had had his ears pierced in his youth, as someone who was heir to the highest titles in his house. He was the head chief of his Gitksan house in the Wolf clan when he died of heart failure on 20 April 1972. He was then eighty-one years old.

In addition to Patrick's pre-mortem statement and Edward's pierced-ear birthmarks, as a child Edward is said to have made a number of statements, described below, from the vantage point of Patrick Carter.

Investigation of the Case

This case was first investigated by Dr David Barker in 1978 and then by Dr Ian Stevenson in 1979. I have relied on their notes for much of this information. I first encountered the case in 1984 and conducted a follow-up interview with Edward and his relatives in 1990.[11] I have interviewed Edward, his mother, his maternal grandmother, his late maternal great-grandmother, and Patrick Carter's adult daughter.

The Life and Ear-Piercing of Patrick Carter

Patrick Carter was born in the village of Kispiox in 1891. No one alive today witnessed Patrick having his ears pierced in his youth; however, Jean Slade, Edward Taylor's maternal great-grandmother and a more or less (junior) contemporary member of the same house and clan as Patrick Carter, said she felt it likely that he had had them pierced when he was a child, because he was *skuweeksul*, the child of parents who were chiefs. She had not attended the ceremony or ceremonies, called *Namoo*, in which Patrick's ears were pierced.

Patrick Carter's daughter remembered seeing the marks on her father's ears. Patrick Carter did not wear earrings in her memory, and she did not remember his mentioning having his ears pierced. Patrick Carter had indeed become the head chief of his house many years before his death.

Reasons for Seeing Edward as Patrick 'Come Back'

As mentioned above, Patrick Carter made it very clear where he wanted to come back. When he knew he was dying, Patrick told Henry Franklin (the husband and son-in-law of important women in Patrick's clan) that he wanted to be reborn in Henry's home because he didn't want to

Figure 5. Congenital marks on the helix of Edward Taylor's left ear. (Photograph Antonia Mills)

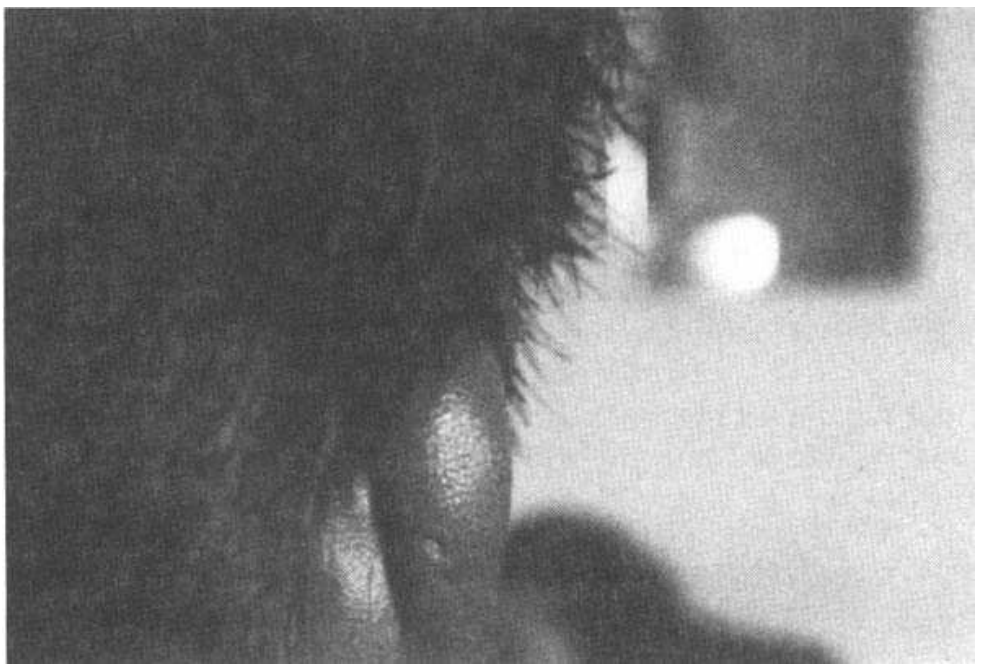

Figure 6. Congenital marks on the helix of Edward Taylor's right ear. (Photograph by Antonia Mills)

hitch-hike anymore and wanted to go by car. (Henry Franklin's household had three cars.) Since Henry's wife was past child-bearing age, Patrick Carter said he wanted to return to Henry Franklin's daughter Alice.

At the time of Patrick Carter's death, Alice was nineteen years old. She recalls being frightened of him as a child, although she could give no cause. She recalled Patrick coming into the house when she was younger, pointing to her, and telling her grandmother Jean Slade, that he wanted to come back to her (Alice).

After Edward's birth his great-grandmother Jean Slade noted the pierced-ear marks on both his ears. The first time she saw him, Patrick Carter's daughter noted that the marks on Edward's ears were positioned where she had seen holes in her father's ears. Therefore, there was no doubt in their minds that Patrick's wish had been fulfilled.

In addition, as Edward (called Eddie) became verbal, he is said to have acted and spoken from the perspective of Patrick Carter. It was noted that Eddie wanted to stay at his grandparents' (Henry Franklin's) house rather than with his mother when she was not living with her parents. (Eddie's parents had separated some time after his birth.) This was expressed by his becoming ill when living with his mother and remaining in good health when in the company of his maternal grandparents and his great-grandmother, the contemporary of Patrick Carter's who lived in her daughter's (the Franklin) home. It was assumed that Edward wanted to be in this household because he was close to these people who were in Patrick Carter's clan, and because they lived in the same village as the late Patrick Carter. Therefore Eddie took up residence with his maternal grandparents when still an infant and remained living with them from the time he was one year old until he was about seven years old.

When Eddie Taylor was less than four years old he became angry when he learned that Patrick Carter's home had been torn down and asked who had done this. To add insult to injury, the man who had demolished the home had married Patrick Carter's widow. When he was told this, Eddie is said to have asked for a knife 'to cut him up.'

When I investigated the case in 1984 Eddie was eleven years old. He no longer recalled having said these things, and listened with curiosity and amusement to his great-grandmother's depiction of his statements. When I again investigated the case in 1990, Eddie was aware of the significance of his pierced-ear birthmarks and aware that he was said to be Patrick Carter reborn. However, he did not remember what he

was alleged to have said when little, nor my interview with his grandmother in 1984. He is close to Patrick Carter's daughter and her children, but it is impossible to distinguish what part of that closeness is due to his 'being' Patrick Carter come back and what is because Patrick's daughter is married to his mother's brother, and her children are his cousins as well as his neighbors. Indeed, my assessment of his being close to them rests on observation of him with them in both houses. When I asked if he felt close to Patrick's daughter, he said indifferently, 'No.'

Eddie is alone in his matrilineal house in having congenitally pierced-ear marks, but certainly not alone in being considered a case of reincarnation. His elder sister and younger brother are also said to be particular people reborn, as are all of the children of one of his mother's sisters. Indeed this aunt quipped, 'I wonder what is the matter with me, that they don't know who I am.' Note that she said, 'Who I am,' not 'Who I was.'

Discussion

These three cases of Gitksan born with pierced-ear birthmarks presented above are part of a special set of six such cases of congenital ear marks.[12] There are many other cases of reported reincarnation among the Gitksan which involve different kinds of birthmarks or which are based on criteria other than birthmarks, some of which I have presented elsewhere (Mills 1988a, 1988b, 1991). Obviously, such cases play an important part in Gitksan self-definition, and concepts of identity and of the 'individual.' The logic the Gitksan use in no way makes it impossible for person A to 'be' person B.

Such cases are obviously anything but culture-free. They are steeped in Gitksan concepts of identity and are part of their cultural construction of the self and society. Gitksan families take great pleasure in finding a deceased relative reborn. Among the Gitksan, families practically vie to have it acknowledged that a well-beloved family member, especially a high chief, has been born among them. The situation is indeed in some ways analogous to the search for the rebirth of Tibetan tulkus.

The expectation that a child be someone reborn may subtly (or not so subtly) cause a young child to adopt the traits he or she hears attributed to the previous personality. There is little doubt that a child is sometimes taught to think of him or herself as the deceased person and *persona*. The discerning reader will have noted that one of the details

interpreted as evidence that Jeremy was Joshua come back was his calling Margaret 'granny'; however, he was told not to hit 'granny' the first time he met her. It would have been more telling if he had called her 'sister,' as Joshua would have.

Western theories of personality development and language acquisition can adequately account for the assumption of a previous-life identity on the part of young children, although they do not necessarily explain all that such children say or the accuracy of some of their statements (see Mills 1988a; Stevenson 1966). For example, Olson has described a Haisla case in which a child apparently had paranormal knowledge. Olson reported that the child 'as soon as he could speak, kept saying, "I had a set of gambling sticks hidden. Let's go and get my gambling outfit." Finally the mother went with him and he took them from a hollow in the roots of a tree. The sticks were recognized as belonging to her brother, who had died years before. The child was the brother reborn' (Olson 1940: 181–2). If the mother truly did not know that her brother had hidden his gambling sticks in the tree, the child's finding them is hard to explain. A Gitksan informant has told me of a similar case in which she as a child dug up the cedar bark rope which 'she' had buried in her previous life. However, it is the occasional occurrence of birthmarks and birth defects, which are not apparently genetically transmitted but which are very similar to injuries or marks intentionally made on the previous personality, that are the most difficult to explain in terms of our current understanding of cultural construction and genetics. In some cases, birthmarks and birth defects are known to have a genetically transmitted component.[13] However, there does not seem to be any evidence that the kinds of pits in the lobe, the back, or the rim of the ears are genetically inherited. Alan's father has a congenitally pierced-ear mark; however, the placement of the mark is distinctly different from Alan's.

The three hypotheses that might explain such birthmarks are 1) some sort of fraud (marking of the child after birth so that he or she appears to have a 'sign' of being someone reborn); (2) maternal impressions; and/or (3) preconception impressions. I will discuss these alternative explanations in the above order.

Fraud

I was asked by a colleague if the parents of a child might not pierce a child's ears in order to promote the claim that the child was a particular person reborn. In some cases babies did have their ears pierced at a

very early age on the Northwest Coast. As noted above, Florence Edenshaw Davidson (Blackman 1982: 53) said that her grandmother had pierced her ears when she was four days old, in the 'traditional Haida ritual.' However, there is a difference between deliberately and ceremonially piercing a baby's ears and doing so surreptitiously and then claiming that they were congenitally pierced.

I think that it is highly improbable that the babies' ears were fraudulently pierced in any of the cases cited (or any others on which I have information). In all three cases described above, the boys with pierced-ear marks were born in a hospital in a city at some distance from the mother's native community, and the pierced-ear marks were not noticed until the baby was inspected by great-grandmothers in the previous personality's home village. Two of the three subjects have non-Native fathers who would be unlikely to help pierce their sons' ears shortly after their birth. In Alan Webster's case, in which both parents were Native, neither of the baby's parents were aware that the previous personality, Arthur, had pierced ears (and in fact Arthur's mother herself is not sure that he did), although the baby's father, having a pierced-ear mark himself, is aware of the significance of congenitally pierced ears. In short, I do not think that the parents in any of these cases would seek to pierce the child's ears and then to claim that they were natural birthmarks. Even if they should, it would be difficult to accomplish without detection in a hospital. If they did pierce the baby's ears, they would be most likely to do so in a ceremonial, potlatch context, rather than surreptitiously.

Having congenitally pierced ears is certainly not a prerequisite to being considered an heir to a chief's title. While the Gitksan do place importance on finding their members when they are reborn, not all individuals who become head chiefs in Gitksan society claim to know who they were in a previous life. Of those who do make such a claim, not all have birthmarks related to that life.

Maternal Impressions

Many North American Indians, including the Gitksan, believe that certain experiences of the mother during her pregnancy can have an effect upon the unborn child. In many cultures a series of taboos are observed by pregnant women to prevent harm to the foetus. Part of this belief is that the mother's thoughts and her visual experience can have an impact on the unborn child. In these cases of pierced-ear birthmarks,

one possible explanation may be that the mother's consciousness of the marks on the ears of the person whom she believes to be taking rebirth in her baby has the effect of creating the marks on her baby's ears in utero. Emmons (1991: 288), quoted above, noted that Mrs Clark thought that the baby's congenitally pierced ears were the result of the mother thinking about the deceased woman with ceremonially pierced ears.

In the three cases described above, however, this seems improbable. It is very unlikely that during her pregnancy Jeremy Holder's mother ever thought of Joshua Pounder, a man who had died long before her birth. She was apparently completely unaware that he had pierced ears. In the case of Alan Webster, Arthur Webster had died some ten years before Mary Wilson Webster, Alan's mother, became pregnant. Although her husband may have told her about his uncle's clipped ear, he had not known if his uncle's ears were congenitally pierced (they were definitely not pierced during Arthur's lifetime). In the case of Eddie Taylor, his mother Alice did not know that Patrick Carter had pierced ears until after Eddie was born.

Preconception Impressions

Another Gitksan explanation is that the deceased person's mind can, if it so chooses, retain the marks which it bore during life and remanifest them when it is reborn. Most of the time the Gitksan speak as if this is intentional on the part of the deceased, a conscious decision made so that it will be recognized. In Native thought, this concept can act in conjunction with 'maternal impressions.'

Pierced-ear birthmarks have a special significance for the Gitksan because they are associated with being marked as an heir to the highest hereditary titles or as a great warrior. The cases described demonstrate that the Gitksan concept of identity includes the concept that a person is marked and shaped by previous lives, even if they are not consciously remembered.[14] The cases demonstrate how cultural history and cultural identity are tied to personal identity.

Do the cases suggest that some process is taking place which Western concepts of genetic and cultural transmission do not explain? Anthropologists have by training learned to record what others say is happening and to suspend judgment about what they actually think may be taking place. When they do test specific hypotheses, the survival of some aspect of the human personality or mind after physical

death is seldom one of them. However, being open minded includes serious examination of the hypothesis that the mind of a deceased person continues to have a very specific effect on a subsequently born child.

The evidence from the numerous cases in which there is a striking correspondence between injuries, incisions, or the effects of illness on a deceased person and corresponding birthmarks on a subsequently born child needs to be carefully and critically examined and assessed. The data from a large body of such cases will be available in Stevenson's (in press) forthcoming volumes on the etiology of some birthmarks and birth defects. Stevenson concludes that none of these cases prove that reincarnation has taken place. However, a careful consideration of the alternate hypotheses, including the role of cultural construction, and the latest findings of geneticists on memory encoding, needs to be applied to such cases. I am one of three anthropologists or psychologists who are conducting or have conducted replication studies of Stevenson's work (Haraldsson 1991; Keil 1991; Mills 1989). I have found that the data require more study, but indicate that some paranormal process cannot at this stage be ruled out (Mills 1990a). Anthropologists are in a unique position to add to and interpret these data.

Acknowledgments. I wish to acknowledge a Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada Postdoctoral Fellowship (1985–7) to study belief in and cases of reincarnation among the Gitksan, Beaver, and Wet'suwet'en. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Canadian Anthropology Society/Société d'Anthropologie Canadienne session on Reincarnation among North American Indians at the University of Alberta, Calgary, 4 May 1990. Further research into Gitksan cases was carried out in the summers of 1989 and 1990, under the auspices of the University of Virginia. In the summer of 1990 I participated in a BBC/PBS filming of material related to some of these cases, under the direction of Jeffrey Iverson. I am grateful to Jeffrey Iverson and the BBC for providing me with a transcript of the filming. I am also deeply grateful to the Gitksan Tribal Government, for its encouragement of this research from 1984 to the present, and to all the Gitksan, Wet'suwet'en, and Beaver who have participated in it. To preserve the anonymity of my Gitksan consultants I have used pseudonyms, except when quoting the official court record for the Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en Land Claims court case, *Delgamuuk vs. the Queen*, which is a public document.

Notes

1 Concern over reincarnating in the proper matriline or in the proper kin group characterizes other Northwest Coast and Yukon Subarctic societies (see Blackman 1982; McClellan 1981; Seguin 1984; Stevenson 1966, 1974, 1975b, *inter alia*).

2 I am grateful to my student Eric Gerde for pointing out the inverse relationship of interval to birthmarks.

3 Tattoo birthmarks, like congenitally pierced ears, are a kind of birthmark that correspond to intentional marking of the body of the previous personality. I have described elsewhere (Mills 1988a) one case in which a Gitksan chief had had her arm tattooed, and the subject had a birthmark at the same location. Stevenson (in press) has described another case among the Tlingit in which a child was born with a birthmark resembling the tattoo of a wolf, the clan crest, which had been incised on the previous personality's hand. Ravenhill (1938: 85) summarizes some of the ethnographic accounts of tattoo marks on the Northwest Coast.

Intentional marking of the body may be done once a person is deceased, in order to know when the person is reborn. Voegelin (1942: 116) has reported that the Klamath, Plateau Indians inland from the Northwest Coast, pierced the noses and ears of corpses. Farther afield, Stevenson has reported this for the Igbo (1985) and among the Burmese (1983, 1987).

4 Charlotte Ortiz told me (20 November 1991 at the American Anthropological Association meetings) that 'twins they say come back. You have to be especially careful that they don't go away. If they don't like the family, they leave.' She said that she knew of 'one little girl – the way she talks when real young – three years old – my relative said that shows she's an old lady come back.'

An Omaha native whom I met at the same convention said that he had also heard of children who were born with signs such as pierced-ear marks.

Lurie, in the *Northeast* volume of *The Handbook of North American Indians* (1978: 697, 703) provides pictures of a Winnebago man and a Winnebago woman wearing multiple earrings in holes pierced from the lobe towards the top of the ear (see Radin, chapter 4 this volume, regarding Winnebago belief in reincarnation).

5 A letter from Laila Williamson, scientific assistant at the American Museum of Natural History, dated 29 August 1989, provided information about the source of the label.

6 Judith Malcolm, the current Chief Maliskol, head chief of the house of Maliskol, said the esoteric meaning of the name Maliskol is 'Sensitive Ears.' She explained, 'the position Maliskol played in the Gitksan society was that he was a messenger, and if you have sensitive ears it means that you have to pick up as much information as possible in order for you to deliver it ... Maliskol would play the same kind of role as the speaker of the House of Parliament.' Judith said that in 'the physical sense' the name means 'pierced ear.'

7 Jeremy's great-aunt Judith and great-grandmother Matilda Malcolm heard Joshua Carter make this humorous assertion to his 'sister.'

8 Although Mary and Philip are from different houses, because they are from the same clan, their marriage was considered an instance of clan incest. Alan's adoption into the Frog clan, described below, solves in some sense the problem of having his mother and father from the same clan.

9 A violent mode of death typifies a large proportion of cases of reputed reincarnation among the Wet'suwet'en (Mills 1988b) and other Amerindian peoples, and among the Hindu and Buddhist societies in which cases have been studied (Cook, Pasricha, Samararatne, Maung, and Stevenson 1983; Stevenson 1987). In thirty to thirty-six per cent of the solved cases of the reincarnation type in which the previous personality met with a violent death, the subject of the case had a phobia related to the mode of death (Cook, et al. 1983; Stevenson 1990).

10 In fact, the problem of incorrect alliances goes back another generation as well. Philip, Jr's father, Philip Webster, Sr, (Alan's grandfather) is a Tsimshian of the Blackfish clan. His mother Anne Malcolm Webster was born as a member of the Gitksan Fireweed house of Maliskol. Because the Gitksan Fireweed clan and the Tsimshian Killerwhale clans are allied to each other, the marriage was not considered strictly correct. The situation of having the father and mother in the same clan poses problems for potlatching, since the father's and mother's clans are both expected to make contributions, and to play complementary roles, something they cannot do if they are the same. Anne Webster was eventually adopted into the Frog clan as a head chief of a particular house.

11 A longer account of this case is to appear in Stevenson (in press). I have described the case in 'A Preliminary Report of Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en Cases of Reincarnation with Birthmarks,' a paper delivered at the American Anthropological Association meeting in Phoenix, Arizona, in November 1988.

12 The fourth Gitksan so born, as already stated, is Alan Webster's father, Philip Webster, Jr, who was born with a single pierced-ear mark on the lobe of his left ear. The fifth case is also in the house of Maliskol. Kirk

Harold, born 23 May 1988, has a single pierced-ear mark on the front of his left ear lobe, positioned very much like the one on Philip Webster, Jr. However, Kirk is said to be the reincarnation of his late mother's father, who said to his daughter that he was born with a congenitally pierced ear: 'I was born to be a chief,' he told her. However, his pierced-ear mark was at a different spot, on the middle to upper rim of his left ear. He was, at the time of his death, the head chief of his house, which is in the Wolf clan. He is from a different house and village than Edward Taylor and Patrick Carter, who are also members of the Wolf clan.

Kirk's parents were convinced that Kirk was his grandfather reborn, not so much on the basis of his pierced-ear mark as because this head chief appeared after his death to both his daughter and his son-in-law. When I last saw Kirk in 1990, he was too young to be talking. This is one of many cases to be investigated further in the future.

13 Moles or naevi (Stevenson in press) and *pectus excavatum* or funnel chest (Mills 1990b) are examples of birthmarks and birth defects, respectively, occurring in the context of cases of reported reincarnation which have been demonstrated to have a genetic component, judged by the criterion of the same anomaly occurring in parents and children.

14 It is noteworthy that pierced-ear birthmarks occur in other societies as well, in which they have different symbolic meaning. Metcalf (1982) reports a case in Borneo in which the birthmark served as a sign that the previous personality had been reborn, but in which the pierced ear did not have significant ritual importance. Stevenson has also noted pierced-ear birthmarks in cases in India, Sri Lanka, and Burma (personal communication). Congenitally pierced ears also occur, rarely, among the Western population, in which case they are unlikely to be interpreted as a sign of rebirth.

IAN STEVENSON

14 Cultural Patterns in Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation among the Tlingit Indians of Southeastern Alaska

Editor's Note: The first part of the following chapter was originally published under the same title in 1966 in the *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* 60(3): 229–43 and is reprinted here with the permission of the author and the journal. Stevenson has made minor stylistic changes to the article, and he has added his 'Afterthoughts' to recount his later research with the Tlingit.

Since 1966, Stevenson has continued to pursue the study of cases of the reincarnation type in a number of different cultures outside of Amerindian ones. These include India, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Lebanon, Turkey, and Brazil, as well as North American and European non-tribal peoples. Continued research (Cook, Pasricha, Samararatne, U Win Maung, and Stevenson 1983) has demonstrated that the features described below are also characteristic of a larger sample of 856 cases from six cultures. The number of cases on file at the Division of Personality Studies of the University of Virginia has continued to increase.

Seven Tlingit cases are more fully described in Stevenson's book *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* (1974). Stevenson (in press) has described five of these cases as well as four additional Tlingit cases in his forthcoming work on birthmarks and birth defects in cases suggestive of reincarnation. This work contains further information on Tlingit cases, including photographs of some of the birthmarks. [A. M.]

ABSTRACT. A belief in reincarnation forms a central tenet of the traditional religion of the Tlingit. The belief seems to derive support from the occurrence of cases in which a child seems to remember a previous life or is identified on other evidence as being the reincarnation of a deceased person. This paper describes and in some instances enumerates the principal features of forty-three

cases suggestive of reincarnation among the Tlingit of Alaska. One feature is 'announcing dreams' experienced by pregnant women (and sometimes other persons), in which the appearing person seems to announce his or her imminent reincarnation as a baby. Another feature of Tlingit cases is birthmarks or birth defects that are said to correspond to wounds or other marks on the body of the person of whom the child is said to be the reincarnation. With few exceptions the subject of a case and the concerned deceased person are related, and in seventy per cent of cases they are related through the subject's mother (this accords with the matrilineal organization of Tlingit society). There are no instances of claimed change of sex from one life to another, in contrast to the occurrence of such cases in some other cultures, such as that of the Inuit. (Some features of the Tlingit cases are compared with a smaller number – fifteen – of the cases among the Inuit.)

Persons familiar with the world-wide survey and analysis of cases suggestive of reincarnation which I am conducting sometimes comment that cases of this kind only occur in cultures favourable to the idea of reincarnation. This is incorrect since I have studied numerous cases of this type which have occurred in cultures generally or severely hostile to the idea of reincarnation, for example, Europe and North America. Moreover, at least some of these latter cases have occurred in families quite ignorant of reincarnation or, if somewhat knowledgable about it, quite opposed to the belief.

But if we ask whether a culture influences the incidence of reported cases, the answer becomes clearly affirmative. Note that I say *reported* cases, because we have no reliable data yet on the *actual* incidence of cases, which almost certainly exceeds the incidence of reported cases, perhaps by a large number. Among areas where the incidence of reported cases seems particularly high we must certainly include northern India (especially the state of Uttar Pradesh and other districts along the Ganges valley), Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Burma (now Myanmar), and Thailand. Almost half of the cases in my files, now numbering almost 600 in all, come from these areas. Even when we take into account the dense population of these areas, the incidence of reported cases there still exceeds that of most other parts of the world.

Probably the highest incidence of reported cases in the world occurs in Alaska among the Tlingit Indians of the southeastern part of that state. I have visited this area four times to investigate the cases there and in a rather short time collected some information on no less than

forty-three cases suggestive of reincarnation among the Tlingit. Hints and fragments, and secondary accounts of other cases that I did not have time to investigate, make me confident that the real incidence of cases greatly exceeds the number I actually studied. But taking only these latter examples yields a very high incidence of cases among the Tlingit Indians. We happen to have rather accurate recent census figures and reasonable earlier estimates of the population of the Tlingits in the late nineteenth century. On the basis of these counts and estimates I have calculated that between 1851 and 1965 (the period covered by the forty-three cases), 40,000 Tlingits lived, including the living generation. This gives an incidence of reported cases suggestive of reincarnation among the Tlingits of roughly one case in a thousand.[1] I believe this high incidence considerably exceeds that even of southeastern Asia.

The Tlingits (and also their near neighbours, the Inuit, Aleuts, Athabaskans, Haidas, and Tsimshians) believe in reincarnation. Among younger Tlingits the belief has much less strength, but persists more strongly in the middle-aged and elderly. I have reviewed elsewhere the evidence which suggests (although not compellingly) that the ancestors of the Tlingits imported all or some of their ideas on reincarnation from Asia (Stevenson 1974: 216–69). But whatever the origin of the Tlingits' belief in reincarnation, they hold (or did hold) the belief far more strongly than most other Indian tribes of North America. We can find the belief among other American Indian tribes to be sure, but in a much less developed form than we find it among the northwest Indians, especially the Tlingits.

It would seem then that a connection may exist between the high incidence of reported cases in southeast Asia and southeast Alaska and the strong beliefs that the peoples of these lands have in reincarnation. I do not think we have yet anything like enough data for a full analysis of the relationship between culture and cases, especially with regard to the important and vexing question of how far cultural acceptance of reincarnation may promote the formation of cases of the reincarnation type. The similarity of patterns of cases suggestive of reincarnation in widely separated cultures suggests to me (as do other features of the cases) some human experience transcending cultural influences. This large topic of the permissive or promoting influence of cultures on the occurrence of these cases must await a fuller treatment elsewhere.

In the present article I wish to draw attention to observations which suggest that the patterns of cases of the reincarnation type differ somewhat in different cultures which may all be favourable to the general

idea of reincarnation. I shall illustrate this by showing correlations between the patterns of cases among the Tlingit Indians of Alaska and certain other prominent features of Tlingit culture. In this I shall chiefly focus attention on three features of the cases of the reincarnation type which, although occurring in cases from other cultures, occur much more frequently in the Tlingit cases.

Kinship Relations between Previous and Present Personalities

The Tlingits have a matrilineal (although not matriarchal) society (de Laguna 1954: 172–91; Krause 1885/1956). Rank and status in the community descend from the mother and her brothers (a child's uncles) rather than from the father. The Tlingits are divided into two main divisions or moieties (Wolves and Ravens) and a number of subsidiary sibs or clans. Marriage only takes place outside the basic moiety into the other one.[2] The Tlingits attach much importance to matters of descent, or to put this another way, much of their prestige depends upon belonging to the 'right' family. Under these circumstances, if one thinks of one's position in life as satisfactory, it becomes important to return again, upon rebirth, to the same family, that is, within the same female line. Veniaminov, the earliest and one of the greatest observers of the Tlingits, stated that the Tlingits 'believe that dead persons return to this world, but *only* [italics mine] among their relatives' (Veniaminov 1840). I do not know whether the Tlingits' belief in this matter now has that degree of firmness, but the cases I have observed certainly indicate that the previous and present personalities nearly always have had some blood relationship, if not always. If we examine the forty-three cases available with regard to the relationship between previous and present personalities, we find an extremely high incidence of a kinship relationship on the mother's side. This is illustrated in Table 1. I have included for comparison data on fifteen Inuit cases. Inuit do not have a matrilineal culture.

The high incidence of occurrence of the two personalities in the same family makes difficult an assessment of the possible paranormal factors in the claims of remembering a previous life. I have given elsewhere (Stevenson 1974: 216–69) my reasons for thinking that we cannot account for *all* the apparently paranormal features of the cases on the basis of normal transmission of information to the present personality from persons who knew the previous personality. I am not, however, concerned here with the defense of this point, but only with drawing

TABLE 1
Relationships between Subjects and Previous Personalities in Tlingit and Inuit Cases

	Tlingit Cases	Inuit Cases
Personalities related on the mother's side	30 (70%)	4 (27%)
Personalities related on the father's side[3]	5	2
Personalities related as brothers or sisters	3	1
Clan relationship only	2	0
No relationship	1	8
Details of relationship not known or not learned	2	0
Total	43	15

attention to the high incidence of the occurrence of a maternal kinship between the two personalities. The kinship pattern between the two personalities differs quite markedly from that found in cases of the reincarnation type in, for example, the Ganges valley of India. There, a claim of rebirth within the same family occurs extremely rarely. Indeed, I can only remember two instances of this kind among eighty-five cases in India. This rarity of family relationships between the two personalities in cases of northern India harmonizes with cultural attitudes towards marriage, since Hindus of northern India commonly marry someone from another village. Rebirth in another family in another village seems entirely acceptable to them.

Cases with Birthmarks

Among cases suggestive of reincarnation, I attach special importance to those in which the present personality has a birthmark (or congenital deformity) which he/she relates to some wound or illness of the previous personality (Table 2). The birthmark supposedly represents a residue from some injury or disease (with external manifestations) of the previous life. The marks in question resemble, for example, scars of wounds from knives, spears, and bullets, or (less often) surgical operations. Some such birthmarks include pigmentary changes only, but others have three-dimensional features and so closely resemble scars of wounds acquired in this life that I would not have distinguished these three-dimensional marks from acquired scars. The informants, however, insisted that the marks were congenital and not acquired. Naturally the question arises as to whether the subjects might

TABLE 2
Incidence of Reported Birthmarks in Cases of Different Cultures

	Number of cases	Per cent of all cases	Number of cases with birthmarks	Per cent of all cases with birthmarks	Per cent of cases of this culture with birthmarks
Tlingit culture	43	7.6	24	35.3	55.8
Inuit	15	2.6	7	10.3	46.6
All other cultures combined	509	89.8	37	54.4	7.3
Total	567		68		

nevertheless have acquired these alleged birthmarks after birth and only later related them to a supposed previous life. On this point, however, I have the firm testimony of the parents of some of the subjects that they noted the marks at the birth of the child. The importance of these cases lies in the impossibility, as I see it, of accounting for these cases with birthmarks, if authentic, on the basis of extrasensory perception which some people offer as an explanation (or contributory factor) for the apparent memories of previous lives claimed by the subjects. But again I am not concerned here with this point, which I have argued elsewhere and with supporting detail. In the present context I wish to draw attention only to the relationship between the relatively frequent occurrence of birthmark cases among the Tlingits and other features of the Tlingit culture.

Cases with birthmarks occur very much more frequently among the Tlingits than among other people contributing cases to my collection. In this entire collection I have sixty-eight cases with a birthmark or marks, or congenital deformity. More than a third of these cases have occurred among the Tlingit Indians. Yet the Tlingit cases account for less than eight per cent of the total number of all the cases. And birthmarks occur in more than half the Tlingit cases. It is obvious, therefore, that birthmarks occur relatively more frequently among reported Tlingit cases than among cases from other parts of the world. The incidence of birthmarks is almost as high among the Inuit cases of this type, because I found seven birthmark cases in a total of fifteen Inuit cases (Stevenson 1971: 53–5). Table 2 shows these proportions in detail.

TABLE 3
Wounds or Other Marks to Which Birthmarks Were Said to Correspond

Apparent origin	Number of cases
Wounds from spears, knives, axes, or bullets	12
Burns acquired during a fight	1
Wounds of bite acquired during a fight	1
Wounds of surgical operations	2
Wounds of disease or accidental injury	4
Deformities related to drowning	1
Tattoo marks	1
Nevi (possibly inherited)	2
Total	24

How can we relate this higher incidence of birthmark cases to the other features of the Tlingit culture? Perhaps in two ways. First, in the heyday of their culture, the Tlingits welcomed death in battle or during some act of boldness or endurance. Such acts and terminations to one terrestrial existence conferred on them prestige and also the expectation of returning to a new life quickly. On this point Veniaminov wrote as follows: 'The poor tribesmen who notice the better conditions of the rich ones and also the difference between the children of the rich and their own often say: "When I die, I shall surely come back in the family of such and such," naming the families of their choice. Others, however say: "Oh, how wonderful it would be to be killed soon. Then I would come back here again and much more quickly." From all this, we may conclude that according to their beliefs, it is much more preferable to be killed than to die a natural death and also that for those who are killed, the life beyond is much better and the return here quicker than for other people' (Veniaminov 1840: 59).

Wounds thus acquired a special significance for the Tlingits. If non-fatal, they indicated courage and earned prestige; if fatal, they presaged a happy life in the discarnate world and a rapid return to a more fortunate terrestrial existence.

The high incidence among the Tlingit birthmark cases of alleged wounds indicating violent death accords with the importance attached to such wounds in the culture. Table 3 summarizes the different categories of apparent origin for these birthmarks or deformities, that is, the nature of the lesion in the previous personality. Fourteen of the

twenty-four lesions of the previous personalities were acquired during some violent engagement.

Secondly, as already mentioned, the Tlingits attach much importance to re-entering the right family and also to being properly recognized and being given the name one had in the previous life. The earlier ethnologists who studied the Tlingits noted that they made identifications of a newborn baby with a previous deceased personality either from announcing dreams (Pinart 1872: 788–811), which I shall discuss next, from birthmarks resembling wounds or scars on the body of the previous person (Swanton 1908: 391–485), or from both dreams and birthmarks (Krause 1885/1956; Veniaminov 1840). My Tlingit informants also reported the same clues of dreams and birthmarks leading them to the identification of one personality with a previous one. A scar thus acquires the additional significance of being a person's unique sign by which he and he alone can be identified. For the Tlingits, the specificity of the mark became extremely important. In the old days, newborn babies were carefully examined for birthmarks, and if any were found, observers would match the appearance of these against their memories of the wounds or scars on deceased persons of the same lineage.

The following episode illustrates the double importance which the Tlingits – or at least the older ones, for the culture has become weaker lately – attach to scars. On my third visit to Alaska an elderly Tlingit predicted to me that he would return after his death and said he could be recognized by a mark near his knee. He then pulled up his trousers and exposed a rather large and ugly scar of a bullet wound which lay on his leg just a little above the right knee on its external aspect. The informant then narrated the story of how he had acquired this scar. It happened under circumstances in which he exhibited extraordinary bravery. Another Tlingit who felt (unjustifiably so, in the opinion of my informant) that my informant had done him some injury, threatened to kill him with a gun and held a gun on him for some time. As my informant did not run or flinch, his enemy contented himself with shooting him only in the leg, whereupon the authorities arrested the criminal and sent him to prison. The man who withstood this extraordinary attack still entertained strong resentment at his assailant, and he felt that the latter had received too little punishment for his crime. He also exhibited pride with regard to his own unquestionable bravery. Thus, there existed in his mind strong emotional attachments to the scar on his leg. This last feature, incidentally, I have found in a great many of the cases with birthmarks, but a full exposition of this topic

must await a longer article (now in preparation) on all the birthmark cases.

Announcing Dreams during Pregnancy

As already mentioned, the earlier anthropologists noted the reliance of the Tlingits upon dreams in ascertaining who had returned to terrestrial life. In such dreams, the pregnant woman (or another woman, or, very rarely, a man) seems to learn the identity of the returning person. Sometimes the dream occurs before the woman knows of her pregnancy and gives the first indication of this event. Rarely the dream occurs after delivery, but usually it occurs during the later months of pregnancy. Announcing dreams of this kind occur sporadically throughout the world in connection with cases suggestive of reincarnation. The case of Alexandrina Samonà (Delanne 1924), for example, includes a rather typical announcing dream, and others have occurred in cases in India and Europe. The Tlingits, however, seem to specialize, so to speak, in such dreams. In the forty-three cases considered here, announcing dreams occurred in no less than twenty or almost half the cases.[4] In eight cases, the pregnant woman had the dream; in thirteen cases, another woman, either a friend or relative of the mother, had the dream. (In one instance, both the mother and another person had a relevant dream announcing the personality to be born.)

The occurrence of these announcing dreams, together with the birthmarks and (usually) the naming of the child after the apparently identified deceased personality, may provide permissions and even pressures on the child to act as if he were, in fact, the deceased personality reborn. As I have mentioned, I do not think this kind of influence tells the whole story. And certainly it cannot account for the apparently high accuracy of the dreams in foretelling at least the sex of the child to be born.

Before presenting the data suggesting such accuracy of sex prediction in these announcing dreams, I must mention that all the dreams were told to me *after* the births of the babies. There is therefore regrettable room for *post hoc* falsification of memory with regard to the content of the dream. The reports of the dreams are nevertheless suggestive of a capacity for extrasensory perception as the following figures will indicate.

In addition to the twenty announcing dreams in cases with other apparently paranormal features, I have collected testimony on another eight cases in which announcing dreams were the sole apparently

paranormal features of the cases. This gives a total of twenty-eight cases in which a dream ostensibly foretold the arrival of the 'incoming' personality. We should omit two cases in which the dream occurred a few days after the birth of the child, when the mother knew its sex. But we may add three other instances in which more than one person reported dreaming about the same baby. This gives a total of twenty-nine dreams occurring before delivery. Of these, according to my informants, the dreamer correctly stated the sex of the baby in twenty-six cases. This 'score' of correct hits is far above the chance expectation of fourteen for the series and strongly suggests some paranormal capacity in these women for predicting the sex of unborn babies.

The announcing dreams of pregnancy among the Tlingits have a somewhat stereotyped symbolic form. They frequently present to the pregnant woman visual images of arrival scenes. I shall illustrate this from notes I made of some dreams told to me by some of the informants. I shall not put these in quotation marks because my notes, although detailed, may not have captured the exact words of the informant in every place.

1 The grandmother of a pregnant woman had two dreams during the course of which one of her dear deceased friends appeared to her. In the first dream the deceased woman, Mrs Bigelow,[5] was sitting at the edge of the pier next to the dreamer's house in a fishing village. Mrs Bigelow was alone and silent. In the second dream, Mrs Bigelow was going through the dreamer's house looking at all the beds which seemed to be full or already assigned. Then in the dream she said: 'I think Alice has room.' Alice was the pregnant granddaughter of the dreamer. The child born later, a girl, subsequently gave some quite impressive evidence of knowledge of the life and friends of Mrs Bigelow. In this case, the child had no birthmark, and she did not receive Mrs Bigelow's name.
2 A Tlingit woman lost one of her sons, Joseph, to whom she was much attached. After Joseph's death she gave birth to two daughters and then became pregnant again. Two days before her delivery she had the following dream: She was landing from a ship at Juneau and on the dock she saw a nurse holding Joseph. He was dressed in pajamas, but had a coat on. She stretched out her hands, and the nurse gave him to her. To the boy who was born two days later, the family gave a Christian name different from that of the deceased Joseph. But they gave him the same Tlingit or tribal name. This boy subsequently

made a few fragmentary statements suggesting paranormal knowledge of the life of his older deceased brother Joseph.

3 After the death of her father, a Tlingit woman who had lost many other relatives felt very lonely, all the more so because she had moved (after marrying) to another town. Two years after her father's death she dreamed that her father got off a boat with his suitcase and came to see her in a bakery which she was then running. She told him he had died, but he replied that he was coming to stay with her and also that lots of her relatives were coming to stay with her. The dream woke her up and she told it to her husband in the middle of the night. He said it meant she would have a large family. Shortly thereafter she became pregnant (or may already have been so) and later gave birth to her first child, a boy. His parents gave him the name of the dreamer's husband. This boy never said anything suggestive of a memory of a previous life, or at least not to his mother. She, however, did have a large family of children.

4 During a pregnancy a Tlingit woman had a dream in which two deceased relatives (Fred and Harry) appeared to her. Fred said: 'Harry wants to come down too.' This dream led the dreamer's mother to predict that the pregnant woman would have a boy, which she did. This child subsequently gave some evidence of paranormal knowledge of the deceased personality, Harry. The significance of Fred saying 'too' in the dream lay in the fact that the family had already obtained some evidence (including a highly specific birthmark) which satisfied them that Fred had already been reborn into the family. Thus, these two men, cousins and friends in their previous lives, were, according to the dream, to be together again in other lives. But at the time of the dream, one personality (Fred) had already supposedly returned, although in the dream he appeared as the previous personality, not as a young child.

5 A pregnant Tlingit woman dreamed that her great-grandmother (who had died when the dreamer was a small child) was visiting her and was seated at a table. The great-grandmother said she would come back with them because they were the only grandchildren who had taken care of her. She also said she was coming to stay with the dreamer 'because she liked the tea and pastry we had.' (In fact, the dreamer's mother had taken care of her grandmother who was rather neglected by her other relatives.) The dreamer woke up after or during the dream and told her husband they were going to have a girl and a girl was later born.

If we ask why such announcing dreams occur more commonly among the Tlingit cases suggestive of reincarnation than among cases elsewhere, we may perhaps again find the answer in the great importance which the Tlingits attach to proper identification of the returning personality. It is important for the Tlingit to be reborn in the right family among his own people, and important for them to recognize him and give him the status, respect, and care which he earned in the last life. The dreams, like the birthmarks, help in correct recognition.

Discussion

The foregoing by no means exhausts the possibilities for studying patterns of cases suggestive of reincarnation among the Tlingits in relation to other features of the culture. For example, the Tlingit belief in reincarnation does not allow for a change of sex from one incarnation to another. Some other cultures, including that of the Inuit, accept this possibility. Cases with a difference of sex between the previous and present personality account for about ten per cent of all the cases in my collection. But no instance of this kind occurs among the forty-three Tlingit cases. Two instances of sex difference occur among the fifteen Inuit cases. However, the three prominent features of the Tlingit cases which I have described show adequately, I think, the importance of relating parapsychological and ethnographic observations in studying such cases. Before outlining some of my own proposed future investigations, I shall draw attention to the probability that paranormal experiences influence culture just as much as culture influences paranormal experiences.

For example, the apparent success of Tlingit women in predicting the sex of unborn babies from their dreams must reinforce the Tlingit belief in reincarnation. And such an effect would occur even more noticeably from instances in which a child gave parents veridical information about a previous personality which, so far as the parents could tell, the child had no normal means of acquiring. Thus, although a belief in reincarnation in, say, southeastern Asia and southeastern Alaska favours the occurrence, or at least the reporting, of cases of the reincarnation type, these cases, to the extent that they satisfy local inquirers, must strengthen the original belief in reincarnation.

We can perhaps take these speculations of interrelationships one step further. Let us suppose for this discussion that reincarnation occurs and that many reported cases have happened more or less as the witnesses

describe them. The chances of verification of a case then depend upon possibilities for the families of the two personalities reaching each other to exchange verifiable information. Such meetings will be most difficult if the two families live in different countries or states, less difficult if they live in different villages, but not far separated, and easiest of all if the two personalities belong to the same family, as seems usually to be the case among the Tlingits. Tlingit cultural patterns favour the expectation that a deceased person will be reborn as his/her sister's child or grandchild. But perhaps also the occurrence of easily verifiable cases with both personalities occurring in the same family has reinforced the tribal belief in the importance of family relationships and indeed in the importance of the whole system of matrilineal kinship among the Tlingits.

There exists the further possibility that pre-mortem beliefs about culturally acceptable and appropriate homes in which to be reborn influence what actually happens if and when rebirth occurs. On this last possibility we have extremely scanty data, but some rather well-attested cases have occurred among the Tlingits and elsewhere in which a person has announced before death where he expects to be reborn and subsequently a child of this family (or place) has given evidence of apparent paranormal knowledge of the life of this deceased personality. In ten of the forty-three cases of the present Tlingit series, the previous personality had predicted his own rebirth; in eight of these cases, the previous personality had selected a particular couple to be his next parents.

The present report can provide only a preliminary account of work in progress. But what I have already observed gives suggestions for further investigations which I now plan, not only among the Tlingits, but in other cultural groups. If, as I have said, cultural forces do not account for *all* the apparently paranormal features of cases suggestive of reincarnation, they clearly *do* account for some of the variations in the cases. Moreover, we have indications in the material already gathered that the cultural forces or attitudes of a people may influence the paranormal as well as the normal features of these experiences. We may even be justified in speculating that the power of our beliefs may extend into lives beyond this one.

For the immediate future I project a more careful study of the announcing dreams of pregnancy among the women of one or two Tlingit villages. I hope to obtain information about the incidence of such dreams among all the pregnant women of such villages and to make accurate records (in advance of the birth of the child) of the details of

the dreams. (Readers must remember that I only heard about the dreams reported above *after* the child had been born, and this leaves room for some retrospective falsification of detail.)

We need much additional information about birthmarks before they can be interpreted adequately. We should try to learn about the incidence of all birthmarks among the Tlingits and other peoples. Do they occur more often in peoples whose lives make them more susceptible to wounds and injuries than among other peoples? Sometimes birthmarks occur in children who make no claim to remember a previous life, and we need to know how often this happens.

I hope also to gather more information about predictions of rebirth made in advance and then observe their fulfillment, or not, as events occur. Sometimes Tlingits (and also members of other cultures, for example, Hindus of India) point to marks on their bodies and indicate that they may be recognized by the 'reappearance' of these marks on their next bodies, that is, after their rebirths. I have described two such cases elsewhere (Stevenson 1974: 191–240). Cases of this kind offer the possibility of careful pre-mortem documentation of the site and appearance of bodily marks which might later correspond with similar marks on the body of a baby born after the death of the first personality. I have now under observation the case mentioned of a man who showed me a bodily scar which, after his death, will be 'reproduced' (so he believes) on his next physical body. And I am now following some small children who have provided some evidence of remembering the lives of deceased personalities who, when they were living, predicted their rebirths. I hope to follow these children as they develop and observe similarities in their personalities and the reported behaviour of the related previous personalities. To the extent that we find evidence of the fulfillment of the prediction we will also wish to have some objective data on the features of personality shown by the deceased and present personality. How much do they resemble, how much do they differ from each other? A pilot study to investigate with objective methods the correlations of traits in previous and present personalities of cases of this type is now under way in India.

Finally, we need to deepen our understanding of the influence of parents' expectations about the return of a loved deceased person in shaping the personality of the growing child whom they relate to that deceased personality. With its high incidence of kinship relations between the two personalities in these cases, the Tlingit culture provides excellent opportunities for observing and weighing the contribution of

adult expectations to the behaviour of the children involved. It appears that occasionally parents make a 'mistake' in identifying the child with a particular deceased personality, the child showing no paranormal knowledge of this personality, but demonstrating such knowledge for the life of another deceased personality. I have reported one such case elsewhere (Stevenson 1974: 216–69). Cases of this kind might permit a dissection of the normal forces and the paranormal processes accounting for the behaviour of the child.

Conclusion

Cases suggestive of reincarnation have occurred in a wide variety of cultures. The characteristics of cases from different cultures show many similarities and also some differences. Cultural factors seem to influence the incidence of reported cases of this type, since cases are reported much more frequently in southern Asia (especially northern India) and in southeastern Alaska than elsewhere in the world, so far as is now known.

Cultural factors also seem to lead to a greater incidence of certain features of cases in some cultures than in others. Thus, blood relationships between the two personalities, birthmarks, and announcing dreams all occur as features of such cases in many parts of the world. But they occur more frequently in the reported cases suggestive of reincarnation among the Tlingit Indians than in cases occurring in other cultures. We can identify aspects of the Tlingit culture that emphasize these particular features, giving them a greater significance than they have in other cultures.

In a series of announcing dreams the sex of the baby to be born (reborn, the Tlingits would say) was correctly predicted in twenty-six out of twenty-nine dreams.

Although cultural beliefs influence the patterns of cases and their occurrence (or at least their reporting), we also have some grounds for believing that the occurrence of cases with verified paranormal features can influence the culture.

Further investigations of the relationship between cases suggestive of reincarnation and cultural patterns are planned both for the Tlingit culture and other cultures.

Afterthoughts

The paper reprinted in this volume was one of two contributions that

I made in 1966 to the study of reincarnation among the Tlingit. The other was the report of seven Tlingit cases suggestive of reincarnation that I included in my first book of case reports (Stevenson 1974). A reader of the present volume has correctly stated that my interest in the Tlingit cases derived from a broad concern with the evidence of paranormally obtained knowledge. For me the cases were of primary importance, and the cultural context in which they occurred was secondary. I soon learned, however, that a study of the cultural context was essential to a correct appraisal of the evidence from the cases. Thus, I became an autodidactic anthropologist *malgré moi.* I also learned that, contrary to the opinion of Socrates, there sometimes is an advantage in not knowing that you know nothing. If I had known in 1961 how little I knew about the cultures of India and the Tlingit, I would never have ventured to study cases suggestive of reincarnation. I did, however, know one thing, which is that children from various parts of the world had been reported to say they remembered previous lives, and the possibility that they might be right seemed worth investigating.

Every educated person in the West knows that Hindus and Buddhists believe in reincarnation, but few are aware of how widespread the belief is in other cultures. I was in that state of ignorance when I first learned (in 1961) about cases suggestive of reincarnation among the Tlingit. My information came not from an anthropologist or even from a Tlingit. Instead, a White woman living in Haines learned about the case of Jimmy Svenson (Stevenson 1974) in the nearby village of Klukwan. She wrote to a well-known parapsychologist who, not being interested in such cases herself, kindly sent the letter from Haines to me. As soon as I could I went to Haines.

Once in Alaska, I quickly learned of other cases by the simple means of asking for them. You must do this if you expect to learn about them. I subsequently met or corresponded with six professionally trained persons – four of them anthropologists – who had worked among the Tlingit; two of these persons had been so fully accepted by the Tlingit that they had received tribal names; and yet of these six only one had heard of cases suggestive of reincarnation. One of these professional persons – not an anthropologist – who had been given a tribal name happened to be in Sitka when I first went there. When I told him about the existence of the cases, he was astonished and seemed not to believe me. I saw nothing of him for several days while I continued to study the cases about which I had received preliminary information. Then he

came to my hotel and said: 'You are right, and what is more, I have learned of some more cases for you to study.'

I began to study the Tlingit cases suggestive of reincarnation in the autumn of 1961. This was soon after my first investigations of such cases in India and Sri Lanka, which occurred in July and August of the same year. I quickly became aware that the Tlingit cases differed in some important features from cases in India. For example, the subject of a Tlingit case and the deceased person of whose life he or she seemed to have memories are related on the side of the subject's mother in the majority of cases, a connection that is exceedingly rare among the cases of India. Also, one finds no cases of claimed sex change among the Tlingit, and most Tlingit informants believe it impossible to change sex from one life to another; in India, on the other hand, the possibility of sex change is universally accepted, and some Indian cases present this feature.

These differences between the Tlingit cases and those of other cultures led me to my first search for recurrent features in the cases of a single culture, and the paper here reprinted resulted. I even ventured in it to compare the forty-three Tlingit cases that I had studied up to 1966 with fifteen cases I had investigated among the Inuit (Eskimos). I realized that the number of Inuit cases was too small for any strong conclusion from comparisons, and the number of Tlingit cases needed increasing also. By 1969 I had investigated an additional four Tlingit cases, and I then published a more ambitious essay in cross-cultural comparisons, this time comparing the features of forty-seven Tlingit cases with those of fifty-two cases in Turkey and twenty-eight in Sri Lanka (Stevenson 1970).

As the number of Tlingit (and other) cases increased additional differences between the cases of different cultures emerged in the data. For example, among the Tlingit, dreams about a deceased person who is to reincarnate (which I call 'announcing dreams') almost invariably occur just before the subject's birth; in contrast, announcing dreams among the Burmese (Theravadin Buddhists) occur most often before the subject's conception (Stevenson 1983).

I investigated Tlingit cases for twenty years, between 1961 and 1981. Even before the latter date I had also become interested in cases among the Alaskan Haida (Stevenson 1975b). Their cases stimulated me to cross the Dixon Entrance and study the cases among the Haida of the Queen Charlotte Islands. And from there I extended my investigations to the Tsimshian and Gitksan of the British Columbia mainland. I was still

studying cases among the Gitksan when I first met Antonia Mills (in 1984) and found her willing to continue with them so that I could turn my attention elsewhere.

During the 1970s I was frequently in Alaska, and the number of investigated Tlingit cases gradually increased until at our last census of all the cases in our files we had data on eighty-four Tlingit cases. This is one of the largest blocks of cases in our collection. I was able to include data from most of these cases in one of my more extensive papers reporting cross-cultural comparisons (Stevenson 1986).

Since my publication of reports of seven Tlingit cases in 1966 I have published no further detailed reports of their cases. I plan, however, to include reports of an additional four Tlingit cases in a work now in progress.

I am not aware of any systematic investigations subsequent to my own of the cases suggestive of reincarnation among the Tlingit. I should, however, mention de Laguna's substantial monograph, *Under Mount St. Elias* (de Laguna 1972). She gave brief accounts of some cases among the Tlingit of Yakutat. She also referred to the belief among these Tlingit in the possibility of sex change from one life to another. Because the southern Tlingit do not believe in sex change from one life to another, she suggested that the Yakutat Tlingit might have had their belief modified by communications with the interior Athabaskans, who do believe in the possibility of sex change.

De Laguna has performed a further service to the anthropology of the Tlingit by editing the remarkable work of Emmons that remained unpublished at his death (Emmons 1991). Emmons, like other nineteenth-century observers of the Tlingit, was familiar with the cases suggestive of reincarnation among them, and he described three cases that had features similar to those observed in the cases I investigated much later.

Although I came to the Tlingit cases after beginning my studies of cases in India and Sri Lanka, I owe to the Tlingit my first understanding of two features of the cases that have become increasingly important in the appraisal of possible paranormal processes in the cases. These are first, the announcing dreams of pregnant women (or sometimes other persons) that seem to foretell the imminent reincarnation of a deceased person; and second, birthmarks and birth defects. My Tlingit informants patiently taught me about the importance of both these features, which I subsequently found in many cases of other cultures.

The occurrence of these features – announcing dreams and birthmarks

– usually convinces the parents of a newborn baby that it is a particular deceased person reborn. This may make them more alert than they would otherwise be to listen to whatever the child later may say that seems to express memories of the life of that person. It also, however, entails the risk that the parents and other older persons may read more into the child's statements than they warrant. Furthermore, parents who believe a child is the reincarnation of a particular person may lead the child (by suggestions and leading questions) to assume an identity it would not otherwise have done. We know that parents do sometimes impose identities on their children through their expectations and suggestions. I think this happens only rarely, but partial guidance of a child probably occurs more commonly and may more or less vitiate the evidence of paranormally obtained knowledge on the part of the child. We can only ascertain the extent of such influence by careful research, and I strongly support Antonia Mills's intention to undertake such research.

As for the birthmarks and birth defects, their close correspondence in most cases to wounds or other marks on the concerned deceased person suggests a paranormal influence by a discarnate personality on the tissues of a foetus. I have collected a large number of data tending to show that this does sometimes occur. The facts seem to challenge much of current thinking on the nature of human personality and its physical embodiment. If my conviction concerning the importance of birthmarks and birth defects in the study of reincarnation should prove correct, I shall have even more reason than I already have to be grateful to my instructors among the Tlingit.

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Notes

1 Mr. Robert Pace agrees that the actual incidence of cases is almost certainly 'several times' the incidence of reported cases given by my survey and calculations. Further evidence of the large gap between the real incidence of cases and the incidence of reported cases comes from the fact that in nine of the forty-three cases so far studied the present personality was either born in Kake or lived there. Kake is a village of about 500 inhabitants and these nine cases were all (with one exception) of the present generation, that is, the present personalities were under thirty years of age. I spent five days altogether in Kake on two separate occasions and was able to survey the village rather well, but by no means thoroughly. I think the real incidence of cases in Kake and similar villages is probably even higher than the figure that might be derived from my work in Kake to date, which would give a figure of one case in about every sixty-five persons.

2 On my last visit to Alaska (1965) I learned that some members of the younger generation of Tlingits are now marrying a partner of the same moiety. Older Tlingits consider this scandalous departure from tribal rules as a further sign of the decay of their people. The anthropologist or parapsychologist might use it to predict that reincarnation cases among the Tlingits of the twenty-first century will *not* show a high frequency of maternal relationships between previous and present personalities.

3 Mr Robert Pace believes that the matrilineal structure of Tlingit society is so strong that one may doubt the authenticity of these exceptions in which the two personalities are reported to be related through the father's line. Mr Pace has suggested that such apparent anomalies of relationship might have arisen in either of two ways. First, the persons concerned might have been 'borderline' Tlingits with marginal involvement in the cultural patterns. (Note 2 above refers to the breakdown of the cultural taboo against marriage within the same moiety.) Secondly, I might have misunderstood the use of the word 'father' (in English) by some informants. Some Tlingits use this word loosely (in English) in referring to a child's uncle, who is in fact his social 'father' but not his biological father. I do not think, however, that this explanation could have applied in four of the five exceptional cases I have noted, for in these cases the informants spoke English well enough so that I am sure there was no misunderstanding about the relationship being on the paternal side of the present personality. In the fifth case, the informants did not speak English so well, and I could have misunderstood what they said, although I think I did not.

Still another explanation for these exceptional cases is that bonds of affection may outweigh the force of cultural patterns. (These would not be the first examples!) This explanation could apply to either important hypothesis, that is, the reincarnation hypothesis and the hypothesis of personation by the present personality of the previous one. This latter hypothesis explains the cases by a combination of social and familial pressures and permissions towards identification with the previous personality together with (when necessary) some powers of extrasensory perception. I have discussed it at length elsewhere (Stevenson 1966: 191–240).

4 Announcing dreams occurred in only six of the fifteen Inuit cases I have studied, a lower proportion than among the Tlingit cases. Such dreams occur even less often in the cases of other cultures.

5 I have used pseudonyms for the names of informants and other persons concerned in the cases.

JAMES G. MATLOCK

15 Alternate-Generation Equivalence and the Recycling of Souls: Amerindian Rebirth in Global Perspective

ABSTRACT. Reincarnation is a widespread belief in tribal (animistic) societies as well as in those influenced by Eastern religious traditions. There are important differences between animistic and Hindu-Buddhist beliefs, however. Among the most important of these is the expectation in animistic societies that rebirth will occur in relatives, especially grandchildren. Moreover, in animistic societies, reincarnation patterns conform closely to social structure, with cases in matrilineal societies, for example, falling predominately on the mother's side of the family. A generative model of social and cultural change is presented to account for these patterns. The grandparent-grandchild pattern is related to a social organization which groups alternate generations together in generation moieties, and lineal and bilateral patterns are related to lineal and bilateral structures, which, it is proposed, developed out of the generation moiety organization. Evaluated against the ethnography of the Americas, the model is shown to be successful in predicting and explaining variations in social structure and the relation of these to reincarnation beliefs.

In the Appendix to this volume, Mills and I present a trait index to reincarnation beliefs among North American Indians and Inuits. We found references to reincarnation in 130 societies, representing every part of the continent except the Great Basin. But rebirth beliefs are not confined to North America. Worldwide cross-cultural studies with samples designed to minimize, if not eliminate, the effects of close historical connection and culture contact (Davis 1971; Matlock 1993, in press; Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson 1976; Somersan 1981, 1984; Swanson 1960) demonstrate the widespread presence of the belief, with some

sort of rebirth recorded in from thirty-four per cent (Swanson 1960) to sixty per cent (Somersan 1981) of societies.[1]

Animistic[2] reincarnation[3] beliefs are without doubt far older than the corresponding beliefs of Hinduism and Buddhism, to which, in fact, they would seem to have given rise (Obeyesekere 1980). Moreover, the reincarnation process reflected in the animistic beliefs is very different from that of Eastern religious traditions. One difference is especially apparent – the expectation in animistic societies that reincarnation will be into the same family. Although neither Hinduism nor Buddhism prohibits rebirth in family lines, neither requires it, and the statistical examination of cases reveals other tendencies.[4]

Only twenty-nine (sixteen per cent) of 183 non-tribal cases from India reported by Stevenson (1986) involved related individuals. Buddhist cases from Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand had somewhat higher but still relatively low percentages of cases involving rebirth in relatives (nineteen, fifty-four, and sixty-nine per cent, respectively). Cases from two Islamic sects with reincarnation beliefs (the Druse of Lebanon and Alevi of Turkey) fell within this range (with twenty-four and twenty-nine per cent of cases occurring between relatives). By contrast, the subject and previous person were related in eighty-seven per cent of Haida cases, ninety-two per cent of Igbo cases, and ninety-six per cent of Tlingit cases (Stevenson 1986: 210).

The contrast is even more striking when we realize that in animistic societies, the reincarnation pattern conforms closely to social structure. In societies like the South Alaskan Eskimo, which trace kinship between both parents equally, cases show no tendency to fall more on one side of the family or the other (Stevenson 1971). But in societies in which kinship is traced through one parent, reincarnation cases fall on the appropriate side. Among the matrilineal Tlingit, seventy-five per cent of cases involving relatives were on the mother's side, whereas among the patrilineal Igbo, seventy-four per cent of such cases were on the father's side (Stevenson 1986: 214; cf. Stevenson 1966, chapter 14 this volume, and 1974).[5] In animistic societies of all types, grandparents are expected to be reborn in grandchildren (Matlock 1993).

The differences in beliefs and cases of reincarnation between Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic societies, on the one hand, and animistic societies, on the other, call for some explanation. In this chapter, I develop a generative model of social change to account for the patterns evident in animistic beliefs. I suggest that the grandparent-grandchild pattern derived originally from a social organization that merged alternate

generations into two opposed classes or moieties and that the lineal and bilateral patterns arose with the appearance of lineal and bilateral kinship structures.

In societies organized around generation moieties, a child becomes affiliated with the moiety opposite that of his or her parents and is expected to find a spouse within his or her own moiety. The moieties may take opposing sides in rituals and otherwise act as corporate bodies. They generally are supported by a kinship nomenclature in which the same term is used for members of alternate generations, further emphasizing the unity of generations at the expense of biological ties between parents and children.

Alternate-generation equations classically are associated with Australia (Dumont 1966; Lawrence 1937), although they have long been reported for other areas, including North America (Kroeber 1909; Lowie 1917; Radcliffe-Brown 1950; Rivers 1914). Aberle drew attention to the widespread presence of these systems, but he was forced to call his paper 'a finding in search of a theory' (1967: 272). Indeed, alternate-generation equivalence received little theoretical scrutiny before Allen (1982, 1986, 1989a, 1989b). My attention was directed to the topic by Parkin (1988), who relates reincarnation, naming, and alternate-generation equivalence in central India, and I have since explored these connections cross-culturally (Matlock 1993).

Part of the interest in alternate-generation equivalance lies in the possibility that it represents an especially early form of social organization. Allen (1986) showed that the major types of kinship terminology all may be derived from a system of alternate-generation equations approximating the Australian Kariera system described by Radcliffe-Brown (1913). He went on to propose that 'some time in prehistory' there existed a society organized around generation moieties which was the ancestor of all modern human societies (see his scenario for such a protosociety in Allen 1982). Allen is not alone in his speculations (see especially Dumont 1966: 238; Wallace 1970: 105), although certainly his is a minority opinion.

Evolutionary models, taken for granted in the early years of anthropology, have been out of favour for most of the present century. Relations between societies in the distant past are supposed to have been so affected by processes such as diffusion, borrowing, and independent invention that the possibility of discerning connections of any time depth is deemed impossible, and cultural traits that might be thought to reflect common ancestry are explained in other ways (Boas 1896). The

mid-century evolutionary models of Steward (1955), White (1959), and their students (Sahlins and Service 1960; Service 1962) have seen no subsequent development.

Now, however, evolutionary models may be receiving a new lease on life. Recent work in anthropological genetics is suggesting more and more strongly a common origin for the human species (Mellars 1988; Stringer 1992; Stringer and Andrews 1988). Archeological and fossil data are being reinterpreted in line with these findings (see Mellars 1990; Mellars and Stringer 1989; and the reviews just cited). The idea that cultural developments arose in tandem with biological developments is no longer tenable and has been replaced with the concept of a cultural revolution among persons who were already fully modern in appearance, followed by their dispersal throughout the world. Linguistic evidence is in especially good agreement with this revised scenario (Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1988), and indeed language development may have been the primary force behind the Paleolithic revolution (Clarke 1992).

Africa is emerging as the most likely homeland of our species, with a global diaspora beginning 50,000 to 100,000 years ago (Allsworth-Jones 1993). My model assumes that a system of generation moieties supported by alternate-generation equations was in place at this time and was carried by various groups of persons as they fanned out to populate the world (see Allen 1989a: 46). Although the model does not require that generation moieties characterized every group, this is the simplest assumption, and for purposes of argument, I will take this to be the case.

I would emphasize that my model is intended as a heuristic device for ordering and interpreting a diverse set of data on human social organization and culture. There is no pretense here of reconstructing the history of human civilization. Nor do I claim that the processes I describe must have occurred everywhere at the same rate or in the same fashion. However, I would like to think that the model represents a better guess about the general trends of social and cultural evolution than do earlier efforts.

Kinship Terminologies, Generation Moieties, and Reincarnation

Ever since Morgan (1870), anthropologists have distinguished 'descriptive' from 'classificatory' kinship terminologies and terms. Descriptive terms are those that designate individuals in a particular genealogical relationship to us, as in our own system. When we say 'sister' we mean

a girl or woman who shares common parents with us, when we say 'uncle' we mean a man who is a brother to one of our parents, and so forth. Classificatory terms include these persons as well as others, not all of whom may be related to us biologically, at least not in a way that is easily definable. Thus, 'sister' may mean one's female siblings and also the female children of all those persons whom one's parents call siblings, whether or not they are true siblings to them, and 'uncle' may cover a series of members of one's parents' generation, not just the male siblings of one's parents.

Many kinship terminologies make distinctions that do not appear in our terminology. We do not distinguish between the children of our parents' brothers and sisters but class all together as 'cousins.' In animistic societies, the children of one's mother's brothers and father's sisters (one's cross-cousins) may be referred to by a different word than the children of one's mother's sisters and father's brothers (one's parallel cousins), the latter being classed with siblings. The terminological treatment of cousins varies a great deal and this variation was used by Murdock (1949) as the basis of a widely accepted systematization of kinship terminologies.

The separation of cross- and parallel-cousins and the grouping of the latter with siblings is characteristic of the so-called Crow, Omaha, and Iroquois terminologies. These terminologies are commonly associated with social structures that emphasize either the male or female parental lines. The Iroquois terminology may be seen as a variant of the Dravidian, which applies the concept of crossness to all generations, not just that of the speaker (conventionally known as 'ego'), and thus separates all relatives into cross and parallel varieties. The Dravidian and other major terminologies ('Eskimo,' 'Hawaiian') are associated with societies in which kinship is reckoned bilaterally, through both parents, resulting in structures called 'cognatic.'

Kinship terminologies vary from society to society, and the terminology of any given society may combine characteristics of more than one of the major types. Moreover, in association especially with the Dravidian terminology one sometimes finds equations – of particular interest to us here – between members of alternate generations. One may use the same term to refer to (or to address, or both) one's grandparents and one's grandchildren, sometimes even one's siblings and cousins as well.

The !Kung of South Africa's Kalahari Desert have a terminology of this sort. One uses the same terms either to address or refer to persons

of one's own generation and of generations alternate to one's own (exclusive of one's own family), and one is addressed and referred to by these persons using the same terms. The !Kung also have a second, complementary set of 'self-reciprocal' terms that link ego with the generations of his or her parents and children (Marshall 1957: 6).

Aberle (1967) distinquished strong, intermediate, and weak systems of alternate-generation equations. Strong systems are of the sort described for the !Kung, with equations uniting two sets of alternate generations, commonly designated as +2, 0, and −2 (the 0 representing ego's generation), and +1 and −1. In intermediate systems, the 0-generation equations drop out, so that there are equations only between the +2 and −2 levels and the +1 and −1 levels. In weak systems there are equations only between the +2 and −2 levels.[6] (Since the terms are reciprocal, ego is included in all systems as actor or alter, but only in the strong system is the term common to the +2 and −2 levels extended to ego's generation.)

The weak form of the terminology usually means that there is not a social merging of alternate generations (for ritual purposes or for the regulation of marriage), but it need not mean that there is not an underlying structure of alternation. The West African Ashanti have +2/−2 self-reciprocals, and the Gitksan of British Columbia +3/−3, technically an extension of the +1/−1 set but in this case functionally equivalent to the +2/−2. Fortes (1969:·194) describes the Ashanti structure as consisting of two cycles, each three generations in length, joined in the middle by ego's generation. One cycle runs from ego's grandparents to ego, the other from ego to ego's grandchildren. Kasakoff (1984: 83–4) uses very nearly the same language in describing the Gitksan system, which she relates to the expectation of reincarnation in the great-grandchild.

The Gitksan are not alone among societies with alternate-generation equivalence in having reincarnation beliefs. Parkin (1988) describes several in central India and refers to others elsewhere in the world. The association would seem to be a natural one. Surprisingly, however, not only was it not supported in a cross-cultural test, reincarnation beliefs were found to be present in more societies without alternate-generation equations than with them. Five of fifteen societies with reincarnation beliefs had alternate-generation equations, whereas six of fourteen societies without reincarnation beliefs had such equations (Matlock 1993: 155). This counter-intuitive finding is unsettling, and requires some explanation.

Much depends upon how 'reincarnation' is defined. Were we to

define 'reincarnation' on the Hindu model, as designating the transmission of a discrete soul from a deceased ego to a newly conceived alter, we would have to conclude that few animistic societies of any kind have reincarnation beliefs. However, many (perhaps most) animistic societies do believe in a spiritual identity between generations, often alternate generations (Matlock 1993).

Typically this identity is linked to personal names. Thus, although Marshall refrains from using 'reincarnation' in describing !Kung beliefs and naming practices, she notes that these people 'believe that the name is somehow a part of the entity of a person and that when one is named for a person one partakes of that person's entity in some way and to some degree' (1957: 22). Names are transmitted between alternate generations in the paternal line, a boy receiving the name of his father's father and a girl the name of her father's father's sister. More than one child may receive the same name, namesakes being closely related to one another in an arrangement reminiscent of that described by Guemple (1965, 1988) for the Qiqiqtamuit Inuit of Hudson Bay.

Spiritual identity may also be recognized through inherited guardian spirits. Significantly, inherited guardians also typically pass from grandparents to grandchildren (see, e.g., Fortes 1969: 198 on the Ashanti). The distinction between inherited guardians and reincarnating souls often is blurred, and either or both may be linked to personal names. So it is with the Ila of Zambia (formerly Northern Rhodesia). Smith and Dale report: 'He is Mungalo, and Mungalo is his grandfather and Mungalo is also his guardian spirit. That is to say, a man's guardian spirit, his tutelary genius, is the reincarnate spirit within him: shall we say, is himself' (1920: II: 157).

'Name souls,' inherited guardians, and reincarnating souls are to some extent ideological equivalents and might best be considered transformations of one another. I found reincarnation to be significantly related to naming after deceased relatives and to personal guardian spirits (the probability of the relationship being due to chance was less than one in twenty in both cases) (Matlock 1993: 132, 149). But enlarging the definition of reincarnation to include such ideological equivalents does not affect the outcome of the test relating reincarnation to alternate-generation equivalence: it is still non-significant. In many societies with alternate-generation equivalence, it seems, the main expression of the identity of alternate generations lies in the kinship terminology itself.

The Development of Lineal Structures

By 'lineal structures' I mean equations in kinship terminologies that contrast with alternate-generation equations in organizing persons in genealogical rather than generational groupings. Lineal structures are associated with unilineal descent groups, such as clans, as opposed to generation moieties.

Some authorities (e.g., Goody 1961) insist that 'descent' be reserved for the rule governing recruitment to unilineal kinship groups, whereas others (e.g., Scheffler 1966) want it defined so as to allow for bilateral kinship and cognatic groups as well. I differ from both these positions and follow Fortes (1953, 1959, 1969) in contrasting 'descent' with 'filiation.' Whereas Goody and Scheffler calculate descent on the basis of which parent (father, mother, or both) provides the kinship group affiliation for a person, Fortes uses 'filiation' to mean a person's biological relation to his or her parents, and 'descent' to mean 'a relation mediated by a parent between [a person] and an ancestor, defined as any genealogical predecessor of the grand-parental or earlier generation' (1959: 207). Fortes's distinction has clear advantages when it comes to interpreting ethnographic data from animistic cultures, because it matches a distinction made by many peoples themselves (compare Schneider 1967).

The Barasana, a Tukanoan people of the Colombian Amazon, provide a convenient starting point for discussion. The Barasana believe that maternal blood and paternal semen mix in the mother's womb to create the body of a child. Blood and semen each consist of 'soul substance' that relates the child to the paternal lineage through the father and the maternal lineage through the mother, but because soul substance is passed through sexual intercourse and does not survive the death of the individual, the 'soul' it furnishes has the duration of a single lifetime (Hugh-Jones 1979: 114–33). This personal soul, the result of filiation, is complemented in the Barasana view by another soul whose genesis is entirely different. This second soul establishes the link between infant and ancestor:

> A baby should be named after a dead patrilineal relative of the second ascending generation and appropriate sex, so that a boy should be called after his paternal grandfather [or father's father's brother] and a girl after her father's father's sister ... The naming ... 'changes over the soul' ... of the dead ancestor into the child so that this soul is prevented from 'disappearing.' The important

thing about the soul is that it belonged to the recently dead – 'three years' was the interval after death given by one informant. It is quite clear that naming anchors the child to the local descent group by establishing its patrilineal kinship to other members with reference to a recently dead member (Hugh-Jones 1979: 133–4).

Even if we define descent as the criterion for recruitment to unilineally constituted groups, as Goody (1961) does, the conclusion that – for the Barasana, at least – 'descent' means 'reincarnation' is inescapable. And there is no reason to think that just because we happen to have an explicit statement from the Barasana, this is true only of the Barasana.

Soul substances transmitted through the parents and a reincarnating soul related to an ancestral name are not logically required and might best be considered religious or esoteric understandings of what conception involves. The corresponding 'secular' view that blood and semen combine in the womb to create the embryo and foetus and that names confer social identity has been reported very widely (see, e.g., Cook and O'Brian 1980; Maybury-Lewis 1984). We may imagine that in these latter cases the religious aspect has been lost, leaving only the secular aspect, but the structure of the process is the same in any event. Both parents contribute to the formation of the child's body, but the child's spirit (or social identity) derives by unilineal descent through one parent or the other.[7]

Now, once the distinction between filiation and descent has been grasped, it is an easy matter to see how lineal structures might have developed out of a generation moiety organization. Lineal structures would require only a change in relative emphasis, from generational to lineal organizational principles. Stressed in one way along lines of filiation a society might become patrilineal, stressed in another way it might become matrilineal, stressed in both ways at the same time it might become double unilineal. Movement away from generation moieties without an accompanying stress on lineality would result in a bilateral kinship structure.

Let us pursue further the development of lineal structures, which represent the more radical departure from the generation moiety organization. As regards kinship terminology, what is involved is the abandonment of the society-wide cross/parallel contrast found in the Dravidian terminology in favour of a grouping of lineally related relatives, accomplished in its most advanced form through the terminologi-

cal equation of members of adjacent rather than alternate generations. Thus, in the Omaha terminology, mother's brother, mother's brother's son, and mother's brother's son's son are called by the same term, and in the Crow terminology, father's sister, father's sister's daughter, and father's sister's daughter's daughter are called by the same term.

As concerns social organization, clans (or lineal phratries or moieties) replace generation moieties as the principal kinship grouping. 'Clan' here corresponds to descent in the same way that 'lineage' corresponds to filiation. The meaning of 'lineage' has met with little controversy, but the meaning of 'clan' is in dispute for the same reasons the meaning of 'descent' is. As used here, a lineage is a group of persons who have a common ancestor and who know their genealogical relationships to one another, whereas a clan is a group of persons who claim kinship but can trace neither all links to their putative common ancestor (who may be a mythic personage) nor between themselves.

So long as these definitions are employed there is little difficulty, but some writers (e.g., Goody 1961) want to add to the basic definition of 'clan' the requirement that it be a corporate group (in the sense of holding property rights in common and acting in concert on ceremonial or political occasions). This usage limits 'clan' to a restricted range of societies and rules out the possibility of evoking it in many cases where it would seem to be appropriate, such as in societies with generation moieties.

In the case of the Barasana, the descent line is clearly set off from the filiative lines, yet there are groupings we may rightfully call clans. Barasana clans claim descent patrilineally from one of several ancestral anacondas which swam up the Milk River (the Amazon) at the beginning of time (Hugh-Jones 1979: 33). Many other examples are available. The Australian Murngin have generation moieties supported by a strong system of alternate-generation equations. As with the Barasana, each Murngin is a member of a matrilineage and a patrilineage by right of birth (Warner 1958: 43), but also belongs to a particular clan, through which descent is traced patrilineally (Warner 1958: 19).

What is characteristic of lineal structures, then, is not the presence of clans, but the merger of the clan with one or the other of the lineages. Earlier I drew attention to the cycles implicit in the Ashanti and Gitksan social structures, but it would be as correct to emphasize the lineages that fall between the generations of ego's grandparents and grandchildren (in the case of the Ashanti) or ego's great-grandparents and great-grandchildren (in the case of the Gitksan). Both the Ashanti

beliefs. Indeed, personal reincarnation would appear to be a prerequisite for the inheritance of personal property – it would not make much sense to inherit in one's future life if one were not substantially the same to appreciate the inheritance. This may explain why reincarnation appears more often in societies without alternate-generation equations than in societies with them.

Furthermore, if this reasoning is correct, we may expect reincarnation to appear more often in societies with weak rather than strong (or intermediate) systems of alternate-generation equations, because in the hybird societies with the weak form, lineal structures are beginning to come to the fore.

I am not suggesting that reincarnation will not appear in bilaterally organized societies. The loss of alternate-generation equations should in theory lead to the development of reincarnation beliefs wherever the loss occurs, and indeed reincarnation beliefs are not significantly related to lineal structures as opposed to bilateral ones cross-culturally, even when alternate-generation equations are controlled. However, the belief in reincarnation does seem to be more prominent in lineal societies.[9] Perhaps this too is related to inheritance. Where rights are passed unilineally, there is some hope of possessing again what one now possesses, but where rights are passed bilaterally, they are divided at each generation. Having all one's possessions again in one's next life becomes impossible, and there is less incentive to develop strong personal reincarnation beliefs (Matlock 1993: 198–9).

Reincarnation and Social Structure in the Americas

I now turn to the ethnography of the Americas to assess the utility of my model. The evaluation is casual, representing notes towards a cross-cultural study in which the relationships between variables will be explored in greater detail and more precision.

Justification for considering North and South America together comes once again from genetic and linguistic studies. Although Greenberg's (1987) classification of American Indian languages into three families – Amerind, Na-Dene, and Eskimo-Aleut – has met resistance from traditionalist American linguists (see comments in Greenberg, Turner, and Zegura 1986; discussion in Ruhlen 1991), its suggestion of three waves of migration into the Americas is supported by dental, serological, and genetic data (Greenberg, Turner, and Zegura 1986; references therein, especially Williams et al. 1985).

Amerind would represent the original, Paleoindian migration; Na-Dene the second wave, bringing Athapaskan speakers and their close relations; Eskimo-Aleut the third wave. The timing of these waves is still in dispute, but a date of 30,000 BP for the Paleoindian migration, 12,000 BP for the Na-Dene, and 9,000 BP for the Eskimo-Aleut may not be far off (Williams et al. 1985; see Ives 1990: 27–33 for more detailed discussion).

There can be little doubt that the Paleoindian migration included societies with alternate-generation equivalence. The system in its strong form is present among the Penare of Venezuela (Henley 1982), whereas equations of the intermediate form are found among their near neighbors, Ye'cuana (Arvelo-Jimenez 1971) and Piaroa (Kaplan 1975). The Pemon, also, have a grandparent-grandchild self-reciprocal, although their terminology does not demand its use (Thomas 1982: 66). Other Central and South American societies with alternate-generation equations include the Yucatec Maya of Quintana Roo (Villa-Rojas 1945), the Mam of Guatemala (Wagley 1949), the Talamanca of Costa Rica (Stone 1962), and the Auracanians of Chile (Faron 1956). A variant system, with features of both the strong and intermediate forms, seems to have prevailed among the Aztecs (Gardner 1982).[10]

Alternate-generation equations of the intermediate and weak forms are very common among Paleoindian peoples in western North America. They are or were especially prominent among various Uto-Aztecan language groups, including the Shoshone, Ute, and Paiute, in the Great Basin (Lowie 1924; Stewart 1942). They appear also in the Pueblos (Eggan 1950; Parsons 1932) and in the Pacific Northwest (Cline et al. 1938; Kasakoff 1984; Morgan 1870: 245). The Ojibwa of the northern Plains, who have +3/−3 equations (Dunning 1959: 75; Landes 1937: 7), are something of an isolate.

There is no evidence of either generation moieties or alternate-generation equations among the Inuit, either today or in the past. However, Fienup-Riordan (1983: 157) argues that Yup'ik naming practices merge alternate generations into two opposed sets. There is good evidence that equations, if not generation moieties, figured in the Na-Dene migration. Equations of the intermediate form are found in the terminologies of many if not all southern Athapaskan groups, both Apache and Navaho (Opler 1936). Equations of the weak form have been reported among northern Athapaskans only for the Hare (Hara 1980). Significantly, though, they have been reconstructed for the Eyak (Ives 1990, drawing on unpublished work by Krauss), who lie at the opposite end of the Athapaskan migratory universe from the Apache and Navaho.[11]

Consistent with my model, we find that the kinship terminology of the Hopi, who have a well-developed clan system, lacks alternate-generation equations, despite their presence in the terminologies of other Shoshone speakers (Eggan 1950; Lowie 1924). The Gitksan and Kitkatla have +3/−3 equations, but the coastal Tsimshian, among whom the lineal phratry system is better developed, lack them (Kasakoff 1984). Again, the western-most of the northern Athapaskan groups have matrilineal organizations and their terminologies lack the equations found among the Hare and the Apache and Navaho.[12]

The presence of at least some alternate-generation equations in the Pueblos as well as on the Northwest Coast is noteworthy. Kasakoff (1984: 89) observes that on the Northwest Coast social organizations are similar despite differences of terminology (and one might add, language) and notes that Murdock (1949: 195) found this to be true of twelve of fourteen culture areas in the Americas. She suggests that the +3/−3 self-reciprocals found among the Gitksan and the Kitkatla once prevailed among the coastal Tsimshian and other Northwest Coast groups, facilitating interaction between them. Grandparent-grandchild self-reciprocals may have had a similar function in the Pueblos.

The hypothesis that reincarnation appears most often in societies with weak forms of alternate-generation equations and in societies in which alternate-generation equations have lapsed is supported by informal observations. I noted above that alternate-generation equations appear among the northern Athapaskans only with the Hare, whereas they are universal among southern Athapaskans. The reverse is true of reincarnation beliefs, which are rare in the southwest United States but common in Canada. They are especially prevalent in the west, where matrilineal clans predominate. Among southern Athapaskans, reincarnation beliefs have been reported only for the Navaho, who have a relatively well-developed clan system, and the Mescalaro Apache (see Appendix to this volume for references to reincarnation beliefs in this and the following paragraph).

In the Pueblos, the Hopi, who have the best developed clans and whose kinship terminology lacks alternate-generation equations, appear to have the strongest reincarnation beliefs. The Hopi case is the more striking, given the absence of beliefs but presence of equations among the Hopi's Shoshone relatives in the Great Basin. Probably it is no accident that the Great Basin is both the area of the greatest concentration of alternate-generation equations in North America and the one region for which Mills and I failed to find reports of reincarnation.

The relatively few mentions of reincarnation among the more eastern of the northern Athapaskans as opposed to the more western is consistent with the hypothesis that reincarnation beliefs are stronger (that is, are better conceptualized or are more pronounced) in lineal as compared with bilateral societies, inasmuch as the western groups tend to be matrilineal whereas the eastern have cognatic organizations.

How far this generalization carries is open to question, however – certainly it does not hold good everywhere. The Iroquois, for instance, have matrilineal clans, yet their reincarnation beliefs are not culturally salient (Matlock 1992). But it would help to explain the vagueness of reincarnation concepts among the Inuit, where they are sometimes but not invariably linked to name soul beliefs (Wachtmeister 1956).

A preliminary test of the hypothesis that reincarnation would appear more frequently in societies with alternate-generation equations where those were of the weak as opposed the intermediate or strong form found a good deal of support – the probability that the relationship was due to chance was less than one in one hundred, with a sample of twenty-eight North and South American Indian societies.

The prominence of reincarnation beliefs in Alaska and British Columbia has led to an unusual amount of attention. We have from this area data not only on beliefs, but on cases as well. These studies provide detailed glimpses of reincarnation in relation to social structure, and allow us to see in operation some of the principles identified in this chapter.

Mills (1988a, b) reports that reincarnation cases of the Beaver Indians, whose kinship terminology features Dravidian crossness (Ives 1990), follow a cross/parallel pattern. Cases of the matrilineal Wet'suwet'en (Bulkley River Carrier) and Gitksan, however, have a strong tendency to run in the matriclan (Mills 1988a). The same is true of the Tlingit and the Haida (Stevenson 1966, chapter 14 this volume, 1975b), as I mentioned above. The Beaver and Wet'suweten are both Athapaskan, and the contrasts in their reincarnation patterns illustrate the differences among groups to which I have alluded.

Stevenson's (1971) data on the South Alaska Eskimo reveal a pattern that is more nearly bilateral, in keeping with this group's cognatic social organization. There is nevertheless clear evidence of community endogamy in reincarnation, something not found in Kutchin cases (Slobodin 1970, chapter 16 this volume). The Kutchin are an Athapaskan people who formerly were organized into clans. These are now in disarray, and Kutchin reincarnation cases show neither cross/parallal,

nor lineal, nor bilateral tendencies. Rather, they include a large proportion in which there is no family relation between the previous person and the reincarnate at all, some even involving trappers and other European visitors. It is tempting to view the Kutchin example as a response to cultural disintegration in the contact era and an attempt to integrate the non-Kutchin presence into their social fabric.

Conclusion

I have sketched a generative model of social change to account for the tendency for reincarnation patterns to mirror social structure in animistic societies. I suggested that the reincarnation of grandparents in grandchildren was related to a social organization built around generation moieties and that bilateral and lineal reincarnation patterns followed from the subsequent development of the corresponding kinship structures. My model supposes that the generation moiety organization was historically prior, and further, that generation moieties were in place when human societies diverged from one another at or before the great dispersal of peoples out of Africa during the Paleolithic era, 50,000 to 100,000 years ago. This would make the generation moiety organization ancestral to all modern human societies.

My speculations here follow those of Allen (1982, 1986, 1989a, 1989b) and are consistent with a growing body of data from various areas of anthropology (Ruhlen 1991: 392–7). Nonetheless, it might be objected that even if it could be shown that all human beings had a common place of origin and that all human languages were related to one another, we would not be able to demonstrate ultimate connections between modern societies, because of the immense time span involved. How plausible is it that we can identify a social organization in existence 100,000 years and more in the past?

This objection would be telling were it not for the complexity and coherence of the generation moiety organization. In an effort to streamline my presentation, I have drawn only the outline of the system. There are several important features – marriage with cross-relatives, ritualized joking and avoidance, the levirate and the sororate, polygamy, sibling sets, and age sets – about which I have said little or nothing. These features are found in bilateral and lineal societies, to be sure, yet in societies with generation moieties they are particularly well integrated (Allen 1982; Dumont 1966; Parkin 1988).

The diversity in the expression of these features in modern societies

is exactly what one would expect if the same social system had been in the process of breaking down differently in different societies and in different culture areas. On the other hand, it seems improbable that such distinctive practices would have been independently invented and brought into harmony in places as widely separated geographically as Australia, central India, southern Africa, and northern Amazonia (compare Allen 1989a: 46).

I have argued that the idea of an identity between alternate generations was implicit in the generation moiety system and was given explicit expression in personal reincarnation beliefs when the system began to weaken. I related the weakening to the transmission of property rights, a process I illustrated with reference to lineal structures. In keeping with my hypothesis, I noted significant relationships between reincarnation and clans and reincarnation and inheritance in lines of descent cross-culturally (Matlock 1993).

Although its predictions will need to be tested formally, my model appears to have some explanatory and predictive power when applied to the Americas. There is considerable evidence that alternate-generation equivalence characterized the Paleoindian migration into the Americas, estimated to have occurred about 30,000 years ago, as well as the much more recent Na-Dene migration. Informal inspection of the ethnographic data supports the notion that reincarnation appears where systems of alternate-generation equivalence lapse.

But important questions remain. The apparent relationship between the strength of reincarnation beliefs and lineal structures needs to be probed more deeply. It may be that the relative paucity of evidence of reincarnation in bilateral societies in contrast to lineal ones has more to do with sampling error than with real relationships between variables. Little information on Beaver reincarnation was available before the investigations of Mills (1988a, 1988b), for instance. Also, reincarnation may once have been more important in many societies than it is today, because of the efforts of missionaries and other contact agents, although the evidence for this is ambiguous. Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson (1976: 102) report that Christianity seemed to reduce reincarnation in their cross-cultural sample, but I found no systematic relationship between the presence of reincarnation beliefs and the extent of missionary impact when these were examined cross-culturally (Matlock 1993: 171–175).

Finally, there is the matter of how the generation moiety organization arose in the first place. In this essay I have argued that the spiritual

identification of alternate generations is inherent in the terminological equations and that personal reincarnation beliefs arose with their passing. Elsewhere, I have suggested that reincarnation beliefs are based on and have been maintained by observations and experiences of such things as birthmarks and dreams during pregnancy, and children's apparent memories of previous lives (Matlock 1990a, 1993, in press).[13]

Signs of the sort I mean will be familiar to readers of this volume. Several of the contributors take this material seriously enough to consider whether reincarnation may in fact occur. We do not need to voice an opinion on this subject to observe that if scientists and scholars of the present day find the data worthy of serious consideration, there is little reason to doubt that followers of the animistic way of thinking 100,000 years ago could have done so as well. And if this is so, then it seems possible that the generation moiety organization developed as a consequence of the belief in reincarnation, as a social recognition of what was taken to be a fundamental fact of human nature.

Acknowledgements. This chapter was improved by the comments of several readers: the editors, Antonia Mills and Richard Slobodin; Carol Ember, Robert Parkin, David Aberle; and three anonymous referees chosen by the publishers. The suggestions of all are appreciated, although I have not been able to address every concern raised and am responsible for any errors or excesses of interpretation that remain.

Notes

1 I have written 'some sort of rebirth' because the definition of reincarnation used in most studies included rebirth in subhuman and non-human as well as human form. Restricting the definition of reincarnation to rebirth in human form, I found the belief present in fifteen of thirty societies (Matlock 1993). The figure of thirty-four per cent given for Swanson's (1960) sample includes adjustments for five cultures in which reincarnation (on his definition) has been reported as present, but for which he coded the belief as absent. These five cultures are the Blackfoot (Wissler 1912: 28), Copper Inuit (Rasmussen 1932: 33), Iroquois (Thwaites 1896–1901: LVII: 119), Yurok (Thompson 1916: 74), and Zuni (Tedlock 1975: 270). All except the last have the belief in reincarnation in its narrow sense.

2 By the adjective 'animistic' I mean to describe peoples or societies whose culture rests on a world-view that includes a world of spirits alongside the physical world and who are concerned with interactions between living

persons and the denizens of the spirit world. Although the word is derived from Tylor (1920), I do not mean to embrace every part of his depiction of 'Animism' or any part of his evolutionary scheme. Although it is admittedly an imperfect choice, I regard 'animistic' as less misleading than other words (for example 'tribal,' 'simple,' 'traditional') that are sometimes used to describe the type of society in question.

3 As implied in note 1, I use 'reincarnation' to mean the rebirth of human beings as other human beings and exclude from my definition rebirth in subhuman or non-human forms (which I call 'transmigration'). This distinction is useful because as human beings persons who are reborn re-enter the social order in a way they cannot as (lower) animals. My approach emphasizes the birth aspect of the rebirth cycle rather than the death aspect, the more common attitude; compare note 4.

4 Another important difference between animistic reincarnation beliefs and similar beliefs of Eastern religious traditions is the absence from the former of any notion of karma (Obeyesekere 1980) and the place of transmigration (see note 3) in the system. The vast majority of animistic societies with reincarnation beliefs lack transmigration beliefs (see Appendix to this volume), and in a cross-cultural study (Matlock 1993: 130) I found a non-significant relationship between the beliefs. Moreover, although not statisticaly significant, a sign test suggested that reincarnation (taken alone) was a better predictor than rebirth (reincarnation and transmigration combined) (Matlock 1993: 176). In the animistic system, reincarnation and transmigration appear to be separate beliefs, whereas in the Eastern religious tradition, they represent alternative forms of rebirth in a cycle that eventually returns persons to life in human form.

5 Of even greater interest than side of family is clan affiliation. Mills's (1988a) data for the matrilineal Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan reveal a strong tendency for reincarnation to follow not only in the clan, but in the lineage – ninety-three per cent of Wet'suwet'en and ninety-one per cent of Gitksan cases were in the same matriline or house (see Mills 1988b). Stevenson fails to note clan affiliation, and his figures may underrepresent the number of cases in which reincarnation was in the appropriate clan.

6 Although I am using Aberle's (1967) classification, I have reversed his scale. Aberle hypothesized that +2/–2 equations were the most easily arrived at, that the +1/–1 set would follow from these, and that the full double set of equations, with ego's generation included, would be the end result of the process. He regarded systems with only +1/–1 equations as anomalous because they failed to conform to this developmental logic, and because he found fewer societies of the strong than of the intermediate or weak forms

and only one anomalous case in a randomly chosen sample, he concluded his scale was reliable. However, there would seem to be no reason not to understand the developmental sequence as running from the strong through the intermediate to the weak form of the terminology, as I do here.

7 The 'religious' version of the complex has been described for the Walbiri (Meggitt 1972: 78), the Iatmul (Bateson 1958: 42–3), and the Bororo (Crocker 1985: 44, 53). With due allowance, it can be seen to operate among the Tallensi and the Ashanti as well. The Tallensi hold that male and female substances are transmitted through the different lines (Fortes 1949: 20), and in one place, Fortes (1969: 257) tells us that they also have a belief in reincarnation. The Ashanti (Fortes 1969: 197–8) provide a fifth example, if we will accept inherited guardian spirits as ideological equivalents of reincarnating souls. There are many other examples of societies in which one or more of the elements in the complex are absent. The Pemon have an ideology of soul substance underlying filiation, but lack a true concept of descent and reincarnation beliefs (Thomas 1982: 63, 142).

8 Hunters and gatherers do not lack a concept of property so much as they lack material possessions of the sort we are accustomed to considering as property. The property of hunters and gatherers is more often what Lowie (1928) called 'incorporeal,' for example, rights to use certain magical spells, to use certain religious
objects, to perform certain songs or dances, to hold certain positions, and so forth.

9 Somersan (1981, 1984) reported a significant relationship between reincarnation and matrilineal descent which I was unable to replicate on a parallel sample (Matlock in press) and which further investigation with her original sample has not confirmed (Matlock 1993: 157).

10 The Classical Nahuatl terminology analysed by Gardner (1982: 91–8) includes +4/–4 and +5/–5 self-reciprocals (the latter set are said to have been rarely used). There are no +3/–3 or +2/–2 equations, but one instance of 0/–2 (the word for 'cousin' is used at both generation levels) and one of +3/0 (one of the terms reported for great-grandmother is the same as that for 'elder sister'). Gardner remarks on texts in which male egos call their fathers 'my son,' but says that this was not done in speaking. The terminology contains other hints of equations between the +1 and –1 levels in contrast to ego's generation, but there is no systematic merger of alternate generations.

11 Dyen and Aberle (1974) concluded that the proto-Athapaskan terminology had a matrilineal slant, but Ives (1990) undermines their analysis by demon-

strating the Dravidian structure of the terminologies of many Athapaskan peoples, particularly those in the more easterly Arctic Drainage societies.

12 The association is not perfect. Many of the Hare's neighbours have terminologies lacking in alternate-generation equations despite bilateral social organizations. Interestingly, however, the terminologies of many of these groups feature Dravidian crossness that suggests a recent association with alternate-generation equivalence (Ives 1990).

13 I was told by contemporary Iroquois that although reincarnation was not part of the traditional religion, some persons believed in it on the basis of personal experience, and several of my consultants told me of events that had convinced them of its occurrence, including apparent memories of previous lives by children and adults (Matlock 1992).

RICHARD SLOBODIN

16 The Study of Reincarnation in Indigenous American Cultures: Some Comments

ABSTRACT. All the peoples described in this book have been influenced by Christianity, which does not endorse the concept of reincarnation and has not since contact with these peoples. Yet all the Amerindian and Inuit peoples portrayed in this book retain some concept of reincarnation. These concepts, which seem to a Westerner incompatible with Christianity, are integrated into their perception of reality and identity. Mauss's concept of self and person as related to reincarnation needs to embrace this synchronistic situation, as well as the diversity of patterning of rebirth occurrence and experiential portrayal of identity exemplified by Cruikshank's elderly Native informants. This raises the issue of whether Westerners should and can evaluate the evidence for reincarnation as forming part of identity.

> the naive life-affirmation of primitive tribesmen ...
> Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf (1953)

Many Americanist ethnographers have mentioned reincarnation beliefs, usually in passing. The present volume is the first collection of papers centring on the subject of reincarnation in indigenous North American belief and social action. Its publication evidences an enhanced awareness of the subject and with that, a noticeable increase in the closeness of scrutiny brought to bear in accounting for such beliefs. These are qualities not encountered hitherto except in work by Indologists and in some ethnographies of south Asian tribal peoples. By way of contrast, my 1970 paper on relevant Kutchin beliefs seems now to leave untouched many questions that should have been considered.

Americanist ethnography of earlier generations represented discovery,

some of it quite remarkable, but in recent decades American Indian data have undergone kinds of analysis and restudy that were not common previously. This is to be expected in the development of any discipline. Some of this development is reflected in papers assembled in this volume.

In addition to this, reincarnation studies directly or indirectly bear the mark of Dr Ian Stevenson's long-time involvement in research into the possibilities of reincarnation.

The Matlock-Mills Index to Reincarnation, although said to be incomplete, documents the widespread occurrence of such beliefs in Native North America. It also indicates the variety of ethnographic material on the subject, a variety that is evidenced in the present volume. I shall comment on this later.

Before returning to the question of evidence for reincarnation as found in Amerindian and Inuit belief, I wish to address several issues arising from the portrayal of reincarnation beliefs in the chapters in this volume. The first issue concerns the syncretism or interpenetration of aboriginal and Christian thought among Amerindians and Inuit, especially as this is reflected in reincarnation belief. The second topic to be discussed is Marcell Mauss's conception of facets of identity; this is related to the third theme, the patterning of rebirth occurrences. Fourthly, I wish to comment on the difference between Native American reincarnation, with its emphasis on the continuity of society and identity, and the South Asian goal of escape from the round of existence, as expressed in Hindu and Buddhist rebirth doctrines. Finally, I will address the question of evidence for the actuality of reincarnation.

Christianity and Native American Reincarnation Belief

Goulet found among the Dene Tha the simultaneous existence of two religious world-views (1982). He points out that other ethnographers, for example, Adrian Tanner (1979) found similar situations, namely, Christian dominance in the settlement, but indigenous beliefs and practices dominant in the bush. In this connection, Goulet cites Jacques Rousseau,[1] who perceived Christianity as 'a thin veneer covering deeplying native beliefs' (1953). This view may have been accurate at the time and place observed by Rousseau, but it is far too simplistic to fit any of the situations described in this volume; for example, Mills, chapter 2, on Christian influences among Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en, or Nuttall, chapter 8, on Greenlandic naming practices.

No one who has lived among northern American Natives would quarrel seriously with the 'religious dualism' of which Rousseau writes. However, the picture presented in Goulet's own sensitive discussion gives this reader pause. That discussion and most of the examples he gives (1982) suggest an either-or situation with a minimum of syncretism. I did not find this among the Kutchin during the years, 1938–66, when I knew them best. For them it was not true that, in Rousseau's words, the two religions walked parallel in the same individual, without one penetrating the other. It seemed to me that they were decidedly interpenetrant and also that there was a great deal of Christianity in the bush and of 'paganism' in town.[2]

Rousseau, Tanner, Goulet, and I may have encountered differing situations. However, there is an ontological problem here. Historically and as cultural phenomena, a folk religion and a world religion are not strictly comparable. The folk religion is, or was at one time, coterminous with the culture; it cannot properly be regarded as distinct from the culture as a whole. The world religion, even though as practised it may possess many folk qualities, has been codified and established in special dogma and large-scale ecclesia. What is certainly true nevertheless is that, as lived and felt by community members, the two kinds of faith, although historically distinct, form a single belief system. The remarks of a Peel River Kutchin, Mrs Elizabeth Blake (see chapter 9), illustrate this kind of syncretism.[3]

The circumstance that cognitive and emotive themes of widely differing origins may be blended in consciousness or, for that matter, unconscious reactions of individuals is something we experience all the time. Ethnographically, it partially accounts for something noticed by Stanley Tambiah. He has asserted that a distinction between aboriginal and world religions is an artefact of anthropological method: 'The idea of two levels [of tradition] is an invention of the anthropologist dictated not so much by the reality he studies as by his professional perspective. By definition an anthropologist goes into the field to study live action, he tries to derive a systematic pattern or order ... The anthropologist who works in complex "historical" societies is likely to view the literary culture of that society as constituting another "level" or order equivalent to the level of "live action" he has managed to record' (1970: 371).

Tambiah here is criticizing the Great Tradition / Little Tradition distinction developed by Redfield for South Asian studies and used by Marriot and Srinivas. The point he makes is a good one although it is not universally applicable. In conjunction with the ontological distinc-

tion mentioned earlier, it probably accounts for a good many of the differences among Americanist ethnographers as to 'thin-veneer' or profoundly held religious convictions, bush vs. town religion, syncretism or distinct traditions, and so on.

Some aspects of Christian doctrine have had a good deal of time to become established in northern Native belief and practice, as has been shown by the researches of Åke Hultkrantz.

Extensive historical research on indigenous American religions has been a specialty of this Swedish ethnologist. It is worth bearing in mind that all of the situations presented synchronically here do have histories. A sampling of the historical dynamics involved is indicated in a review by Hultkrantz of possible Christian influence upon northern Algonquin eschatology (1980).

The historical record, one-sided though it may be, provides a good deal of insight into the interaction of indigenous and Christian concepts of the afterlife among Montagnais-Naskapi, Cree, Ottawa, and Ojibwa. For most of these people there exists evidence on the subject at least two centuries old. Hultkrantz has almost nothing to say about reincarnation beliefs, but his paper serves as a reminder of the lengthy temporal hinterland lying back of the cultural patterns being considered in this volume.

Marcel Mauss: Kinds of Identity

Having offered a brief historical caveat, I shall turn again to the synchronic considerations which set the tone of this collection. Marcel Mauss's insights, actual and attempted, into 'the category of "the person"' form an irresistibly stimulating basis for the consideration of reincarnation beliefs.

Mauss, nephew and intellectual heir of Emile Durkheim, took up the seminal concept of social fact and sought to ground it in history and ethnography. This was part of his aim in *Essai sur le Don* (1925), and more particularly in 'Une categorie de l'esprit humain: la notion de personne, celle de "moi."'

The latter paper, originally the Huxley Memorial Lecture for 1938, has been rather neglected until recently in English-language social science. Carrithers, Collins, Lukes, and their collaborators (1985) have performed a service in calling or recalling to the attention of colleagues the lecture that turned out, tragically, to be the swan-song of that great scholar.

Although Carrithers and associates have many interesting things to say, there is a noticeable omission from their comments. Mauss had dwelt on Northwest Coast and Pueblo concepts of 'role' and 'person,' relying mainly on information from Boas and Cushing respectively. The contributors to *The Category of the Person* (Carrithers, Collins, and Lukes 1985) hardly mention those cultures or any other Native American ones. Not surprisingly, since most of the essayists are British, they devote themselves to Africa, Melanesia, and – more relevantly to Mauss – Christianity and the major Asian religions.

This bias in reference has been to some extent redressed by several Americanists, some of whom are represented in this volume. Several years ago Goulet referred to Mauss's statement in a paper on reincarnation and the representation of the self among the Dene Tha (1988). Marie Mauzé takes off from Mauss in chapter 11 (this volume) of which an earlier version was presented at a meeting in 1988 devoted to considering Mauss in the light of American material.

Mauss's aim was to contrast tribal, especially Northwest Coast and Pueblo, concepts of role and person with those in the cultures of the more complex societies of antiquity, and in Christian doctrine. He sees each member of a traditional Native American society as filling a social role or series of roles, designated by names and kin terms, and sometimes signalized by masks. This *personnage* is a 'member of a bounded tribal society,' segmented by totemic clans or other status categories (Allen 1985: 31). As Allen summarizes Mauss's views, 'The totemic group possesses a fixed stock of names and souls, one for each personality' and 'The bearer of a name at any one time is regarded as the reincarnation of the original mythical bearer' (ibid.: 32).

As early as 1906, Mauss had written: 'There exists an enormous group of societies ... where the system of reincarnation of the deceased and inheritance of the name within the family or clan is the rule. The individual is born with his name and his social functions ... The number of individuals, names, souls, and roles is limited in the clan, and the line of the clan is merely a collection (*ensemble*) of rebirths and deaths of individuals who are always the same.' (cited in Allen 1985: 33)

To this concept of the *personnage*, Mauss goes on in his 1938 lecture to the concepts of 'person' (*personne*) and of 'self' (*moi*) as they evolved in Old World cultures. Mauss has been harshly criticized for employing here a long-outmoded evolutionism. However, aside from the evolutionist *schema*, which Mauss does not stress, the 1938 paper is relevant to

the study of reincarnation, especially in societies with lineage and ranking. Not only is the declared occurrence of reincarnation in Northwest Coast societies channelled by social structuring as noted by Stevenson (e.g., 1966) and Mills (1988b), but Mauss's insights throw light on what it is that is reincarnated, a question only partially answered by references to multiple souls.

While Mauss appreciated the heuristic value of Durkheim's distinction between the social being and the living individual (Durkheim 1960), his was a more holistic view; at any rate, it was if one accepts Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of Mauss's social science (Merleau-Ponty 1960). In this view, which Americanists will find profitable, Mauss never lost sight of the living society member, combining in his being those understandings and reactions which the analyst may view as structures: 'The surprising logical operations attested to by the formal structure of society must certainly be in some way made possible by the populations that live in these kinship systems. There must be a sort of lived equivalent [*equivalent vécu*] which anthropology ought to investigate ... This linking of objective analysis with lived experience is perhaps anthropology's most appropriate task, the one that distinguishes it from the other social sciences' (Merleau-Ponty 1960: 149–50).[4]

As seen by Merleau-Ponty, there is, however, a drawback to Mauss's approach. Like Lévi-Strauss, he complains that Mauss merely provides 'explanations used by members of the societies he studied' (Schmidt 1985: 50; Lévi-Strauss 1950). Curiously, this was a reproach levelled in another connection against Radcliffe-Brown. In both cases, actually to have done that – if indeed that had been all that they accomplished – in its fullest sense would have been far from 'mere,' although it is, of course, not the final aim of ethnology. It would have been something that ethnographers and social analysts aim for but in most cases do not fully succeed in providing.

That 'explanations used by members of the societies ... studied' can provide much insight into ideas about the person and related concepts is well illustrated by Godfrey Lienhardt's references to African 'representations of the self' (in Carrithers *et al.* 1985). These are so pertinent that they warrant citing: 'Professor John Beattie has drawn my attention to what Burckhardt wrote about pre-Renaissance man in Europe: ... "Man was conscious of himself only as a member of a race, people, family or corporation – only through some general category"; and he quotes for comparison the modern French Africanist Professor Roger Bastide: 'It is clear that the African defines himself by his position ...

When one asks him what he is, he places himself in a lineage, he traces his place in a family tree' (Lienhardt 1985: 143–4).

Further on, Lienhardt quotes another Africanist, Father Placide Tempels: 'For the Bantu, man never appears as an isolated individual ... Every man, every individual, forms a link in a chain of vital forces, active and passive, joined from above to the ascending line of his ancestry and sustaining below the line of his descendants' (Lienhardt 1985). Lienhardt adds: 'So, it might be said ... do all who take the idea of incorporation seriously – members of royal houses, for example, or ancient Colleges ... the Bourbons, the Hapsburgs, the Tudors, and innumerable families established as the "so-and-so's" of their local communities, whose secure conviction of their hereditary status, far from inhibiting individuality, has sometimes led them to indulge and exploit it' (1985).

An excellent example of the corporate sense of identity is exhibited in the life stories of three senior Yukon Native women, elicited by Julie Cruikshank and published as *Life Lived Like a Story* (1990). It can be readily seen that Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith, and Annie Ned, all born in the southern Yukon Territory around the turn of the century, 'are three remarkable and gifted women' (1990: ix). Their narratives are full of interest and incident, but to a reader from outside of their Northern Athapaskan and Tlingit societies, these chronicles may seem deficient in what members of our society define as the individual and idiosyncratic features which we expect in biography and autobiography.

In this connection, Cruikshank cites Leslie White's plaintive comment on the life story of a man from a society even more highly structured than those of the North Pacific coast. This is a member of Acoma Pueblo, where 'to live with his people and his gods he must behave according to a pattern that is laid out for him...This means that almost all of his life is formalized, ritualized...The autobiography of a Pueblo Indian is about as personal as the life history of an automobile tire' (White 1943: 326–7).

Indeed Mauss, in developing the concept of *personnage*, had written eloquently of Pueblo and Northwest Coast societies. Returning to the latter, we can, I think, be assured that whatever may have been true of White's Acoma informant, Cruikshank's mentors possess plenty of idiosyncracies, and they are very much individuals.

Nevertheless, what each of the three Yukon elders has chosen to narrate is largely an account of public situations, status relationships, local history. 'Embedded in their chronicles were songs moving listeners to tears or laughter; also traditional stories, genealogies, and long lists

of personal names and place names that seem to have both metaphoric and mnemonic value' (Cruikshank 1990: 2).

In Maussian terms, the three elders have set forth the *personnages* they represent. As some of his critics maintain, Mauss may have underestimated the parts played by the 'person' and 'self' in Native North American mental life. However, it seems to be true that in the Northwest Coast culture area, it is the *personnage* that is seen to be reborn. In less formally structured Native American societies, other aspects of identity participate to a greater extent in rebirth as it is perceived.

This formulation, however, does not quite represent what Mauss has to say. It would do more justice to his view to state that the *personnage*, the nexus of statuses embodied in the previous identity, is incarnated, rather than reincarnated. The late Irving Goldman (1975) has quite a lot to say about incarnation in a structured Pacific Coast society, that of the Kwakiutl. It is a matter for regret that in his 'introduction to Kwakiutl religious thought' (1975), Goldman has no specific reference to reincarnation. It is equally regrettable that Carrithers and his collaborators make no reference to Goldman's study, since his analysis illuminates Mauss's concepts of *personnage* and 'person (cf. Mauzé, chapter 11 and Harkin, chapter 12 this volume).'

Appealing to examples from even more highly structured societies, that is, those of ancient empires, it is observable that in Egypt, China, and Peru, to mention a few, the ruler in a given dynasty was the incarnation of sovereignty. He, or in a few cases she, might or might not be the reincarnation of a previous ruler. To varying degrees, other 'so-and-so's' of their communities are incarnations of the state or the estate.

In Native North America, as one passes from the focal tribes of the Northwest Coast inland through the Rings of Rubel and Rosman, incarnation is left behind. The *personnage* still plays a crucial part, even in the least rigidly structured societies, for each individual occupies a set of statuses. However, much more than on the coast, it is the 'person' who is reborn; even, where the connection between original and rebirth is particularly tenuous, the 'self', that is, awareness of identity, is involved in reincarnation.

'Person' and 'self' can be seen as part of identity in each of the societies considered. Cruikshank's elderly Native collaborators present themselves primarily in terms of status, as noted earlier; yet each woman sees herself as a voyager through a long and eventful life, striving, sometimes against odds, to fulfil her social responsibilities.

The Gitksan rebirths discussed by Mills in chapter 13 are certainly

kinship-determined. However, that the rebirth should occur in one family rather than another appears to be a matter of individual quality and character. Who is reincarnated and in what new or recurrent identity is not a matter of chance. Antonia Mills has discussed the correlation of perceived rebirth occurrences with aspects of social structure among three 'nearly adjacent Indian societies in British Columbia' (1988b: 386). Of these, the Gitksan are a village-dwelling Northwest Coast tribe; the Wet'suwet'en or Bulkley River Carrier are one of Rubel and Rosman's 'Inner Ring' peoples (1983), that is, Athapaskan-speakers partially acculturated to coastal social organization; and the Beaver are a 'Second Circle' group (Rubel and Rosman 1983), who reckon kin bilaterally and lack lineages, clans, houses, totem poles, and chiefly titles.

From this comparison, Mills finds that a major link between social structure and the individual expectations conditioned by it is 'the concept that the desires of the individual will influence when, to whom, and with what qualities (including sex) he or she will be reborn' (1988b: 407). The incidence of same-sex or cross-sex rebirth is shown to be related to variations in the inheritance of titles as between Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en. Mills is able to show variations and similarities among the three cultures and to some extent the reasons for these.

In *The Mouth of Heaven: An Introduction to Kwakiutl Religious Thought,* Irving Goldman cites Tocqueville's observation that 'it is the democrat who is the generalist. The aristocrat is drawn to the particular ... Within the genealogical community no two individuals, providing both hold aristocratic pedigree, are alike or precisely comparable' (1975: 27). This *aperçu* illuminates an important distinction between the pattern of reincarnation in Northwest Coast societies and those of the Inuit, Kutchin, and Dene Tha, probably Beaver as well. Among the latter peoples, gender change at rebirth is fairly common, as it is not in the coastal societies, whereas questions of title inheritance and clan or lineage affiliation play little or no part among the non-Northwest Coast peoples. Indeed, these issues could not appear among the Inuit. However, the great importance to the Inuit of naming practices is stressed in several chapters of this volume.

Among contemporary Dene Tha it is not formal social structure that conditions rebirth patterning, but the peculiar circumstances of women, married and unmarried. Among Kutchin of a generation ago, the ideology of reincarnation was even more diffuse, but it would appear that reincarnation was an expression of community identity and cohesion.

In short, the Maussian viewpoint is useful in directing attention to several distinct although related factors in the determination of reincarnation or of the perception of reincarnation. These are: the person as a nexus of statuses, the person as embodying a particular life history, and the person as a conscious identity. Probably all of these are involved in the perception of reincarnation in any society. However, these categories, as Mauss terms them, are involved to very different degrees in societies as they are variously structured.

Harkin's penetrating comparison of Western and non-Western models of reincarnation (chapter 12 this volume) raises the question whether the same terms, 'reincarnation,' and 'rebirth,' etc. may validly be applied without qualification to beliefs concerning recurrence of identity in East Asian, Native American, and Western cultures. Considering the great contrast among these cultures, 'we must,' as Harkin points out, 'make use of Mauss's insight into the cultural construction of the person and be aware that these beliefs are specific' to these concepts.

Continuity and Escape in Reincarnation Belief

Among Indologists it is generally accepted that the doctrine of rebirth goes back in India 'to prehistoric times; it was then taken up in Brahmanic religion and appears as a new doctrine in the Upanishads' (Smart 1967: 122). However, in Brahmanic and then in Buddhist and Jain belief it had undergone a crucial change. The succession of rebirths is no longer a desideratum. Rather, it represents a fate from which the individual identity must strive to escape. As the matter has been put by Fürer-Haimendorf: 'Once a more sophisticated and at the same time more pessimistic philosophy replaced the naive life-affirmation of primitive tribesmen, this eternal repetition of similar existences would come to be contemplated with apprehension' (1953: 45).

One of the most striking distinctions between reincarnation beliefs among tribal peoples of North America and the well-known rebirth concepts of South Asia is that to Native North Americans, reincarnation is an expansion of continuity, of survival, and of what Edith Turner calls 'connectedness.' For the northwestern peoples Mills has studied, she observes: 'For the Gitksan, Wet'suwet'en and Beaver, the goal of life is not getting out of the cycle of rebirths as in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions or gaining entrance to heaven and hell as taught in the Christian tradition, although the latter concept has had considerable impact. Rather, all three groups expect people to be reborn, bringing

back traits they manifested in previous lives or occasionally manifesting traits they desired to embody in a subsequent life' (1988b: 399–400).

A goal, perhaps the supreme good, to Native Americans would appear to be the cohesion and survival of the matrix of statuses occupied by community members and by significant features of the community's world: plants, animals, and other natural phenomena. Reincarnation is an important dynamic in this survival-continuity; or, it might be said, reincarnation is an expression of the felt need for survival-continuity.

Now, it may be reckoned that at the present juncture of human history, to be at all clear-sighted is to be pessimistic, and that life-affirmation is indeed naïve. However, the pessimistic outlook to which Fürer-Haimendorf refers is a centuries-old development. Why did those who left 'tribal,' namely hunting-gathering life at various periods to take up food-production inevitably turn pessimistic? Was it because they had put behind them the Stone Age affluence which Sahlins (1972) has celebrated and were caught up in the drudgery and the 'limited good' concept of peasant life (Foster 1965) or the 'total scarcity' of the pastoral career (Black-Michaud 1975: 168–78)?[5]

In a lecture both humanistic and, as he likes to call it, biosocial, Robin Fox has outdone J.-J. Rousseau by arguing that Paleolithic life, as the longest evolved, was the kind best suited to mankind,[6] and that 'since the beginnings of civilization we have known that something was wrong' (1989: 240). All the great teachers of history, he observes, 'Buddha, Christ, Mohammed, Confucius, St Francis, Thomas More, Rousseau, Tolstoy, Gandhi ... have urged a return to the communal ethic of the tribelet' (Fox 1989: 235).

The great moralists do seem to share a predilection for the ethic of the closed, stable community, which is the type in which reincarnation beliefs flourish. By and large, members of complex societies are either deadened to the possibility of rebirth or wish to escape from it. A doctrine or set of beliefs which expresses the need for continuity and for interdependence of life forms, as reincarnation beliefs do, is decidedly worth study at a time when continuity of human and non-human life is seriously threatened and when the interdependence of the lives forming our biosphere is flouted and disrupted.[7]

The Possibility of the Actuality of Reincarnation

Some of the essays in the present collection are based upon descriptions of belief in reincarnation. In other papers the authors discuss beliefs and

also what appears to be evidence for the actual survival or recurrence of personal identity after physical death. It has been suggested that these are incompatible themes, not properly belonging in the same collection of research papers. As one who has written the first kind of essay and has never attempted the second, I wish to express disagreement with this position.

In her chapter 13 on 'Rebirth and Identity' and in other places (for example, 1988a: 48–9; 1988b: 408–10), my colleague Antonia Mills has presented a cogent argument for including in an empirical study the investigation of birthmarks said to signalize a rebirth. I shall add some observations from the viewpoint of an anthropologist trained in an earlier generation than Dr Mills.

In the 1960s and previously, when I was at first casually and then purposefully collecting data on Kutchin reincarnation beliefs, I did not go very far in looking for empirical evidence of rebirth.

At that time I had read very little about reincarnation outside of Asia, and, I must confess, did not even know the name of Ian Stevenson, a name with which I was to become quite familiar in later years. Kutchin reincarnation belief forced itself upon my attention by its pervasiveness. To have ignored it would have been scholarly dereliction. Had alleged physical evidence – more striking than a general family resemblance – appeared, I hope that I would have looked into it to the best of my ability, which was then severely limited by total ignorance of the careful methods developed by researchers into the paranormal.

A search for evidence of the reality of reincarnation, or, which is much the same, a serious investigation of alleged evidence would be regarded by most anthropologists as different in kind from our usual activities, diverse as these are. To entertain the possibility of the reality of reincarnation is to look towards the farther shore of an epistemological Rubicon. Searchers for this reality wish, it would seem, to venture into

> The undiscovered country from whose bourne
> No traveller returns ...

Such research seems to aim at replacing faith in a theological sense, or its contrary, non-belief, with rational conviction. To most scientists or scholarly researchers this may well seem on a par with those attempts at logical proof of God's existence which since Kant have been regarded as out of place in our professional endeavours.

I see no necessity for the interdiction of rationally organized efforts

at examining claims for the survival of some aspect of the personality subsequent to its bearer's physical death. Indeed, to refrain from examining these claims as real evidence, to regard them exclusively as folklore in situations where the beliefs are strongly held and tightly organized, is open to two kinds of objection. First, such abstention reflects a superior, *de haut en bas* attitude toward the convictions of one's informants. Second, it is a turning away, on dogmatic grounds, from an inviting trail of investigation into important and interesting possibilities.

As to the first objection, I am not contending that strongly held beliefs are necessarily valid, reasonable, or even sane. The verdict of history shows otherwise. However, such beliefs certainly repay examination. As to the second objection, I fail to see why such investigation is not to be regarded as rational research, especially if it is conducted with the scrupulous care shown by F.W.H. Myers in the late nineteenth century and by Ian Stevenson in recent decades.

Reincarnation studies directly or indirectly bear the mark of Stevenson's work. During the past quarter-century and more, this scholar has been investigating apparent occurrences of reincarnation in a number of societies. He has written not only of reincarnation beliefs but of 'cases suggestive of reincarnation.' In short, he has kept an open mind on the actuality of rebirth. In doing so, Stevenson has of necessity committed himself to the most meticulous procedure in the collection, analysis, and reporting of evidence and to caution in his conclusions. The quality of his work has given to the topic of reincarnation a weight and value not previously felt by scholars other than Indologists.

We are obliged to follow up leads and possibilities not fully explicable in terms of current knowledge, leaving later investigators, better equipped, to fit this knowledge into a future matrix of understanding. Furthermore, as the sociopolitical milieu is altered, there may be an expansion of the area it takes into its purview, and, in a Kuhnian sense, of the definition of reality. This has occurred periodically in the history of scholarship.

Those who have kept an open mind on the question of evidence for reincarnation have not abandoned functionalist, structuralist, or other types of explanation. Mills and Matlock have addressed the relation of social structure to type of belief, although they are among those who are willing to consider whether reincarnation belief may be justified by facts. Turner and Goulet are willing to consider such evidence; indeed, Goulet has some suggestions on how to obtain this. However, not all of those represented in this volume were or are habituated to the Steven-

sonian approach, or would endorse it. Guemple, Radin, Saladin d'Anglure, von Gernet, Mauzé, Harkin, Nuttall, and I have presented a variety of perspectives which do not include the investigation of the actuality of reincarnation.

We urge readers of any and all dispositions to read these chapters with an open mind and to judge for themselves whether the approach derived from Stevenson's researches is antithetical to or detracts from the other ways of looking at and studying belief in reincarnation among North American Native peoples. For myself, I have formed the opinion that we would do well to study reincarnation with great care, both for knowledge and, in so far as we are capable of it, for enlightenment.

Notes

1 Jacques Rousseau, 1905–70, Canadian zoologist and ethnographer.
2 In the 1940s, Madeleine and Jacques Rousseau found both pagan and Christian symbols at a Mistassini Cree burial deep in the bush of northern Quebec (1967:124).
3 The situation is complicated by the secularization of reincarnation belief among eastern Kutchin during the years of my closest association with them, 1938–68. Nevertheless, the blending of convictions expressed by Mrs Blake appeared to hold true for most eastern Kutchin, although felt more strongly by some than by others.
4 My translation differs slightly from that of Richard McCleary (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 119).
5 To be sure, Black-Michaud deals with feuding tribal societies of the Mediterranean and Middle East. His construct may not have been designed for all pastoral or marginal peasant societies.
6 Arthur O. Lovejoy pointed out (1923) that in the *Second Discourse on Inequality*, J.J. Rousseau by no means idealized the State of Nature seen either as acultural or as *Ur*-cultural. The period of human history that Rousseau deemed most satisfactory or at least endurable was the one he depicted as pastoral-patriarchal.
7 An excellent recent discussion of this subject by an anthropologist is Barbara Noske's *Humans and Other Animals* (1989).

JAMES G. MATLOCK AND ANTONIA MILLS

Appendix: A Trait Index to North American Indian and Inuit Reincarnation

The following trait list, maps, and accompanying bibliography of sources referring to reincarnation belief among North American Indians and Inuit has grown from references compiled by Mills (1988a, 1988b). Matlock suggested the trait list format and Mills implemented the culture-area division. The codes used have evolved as the research continued. The work has been done jointly, and we endeavored to code all sources independently and resolve disagreements in discussion, so that in general the published codes represent a consensus of both authors, who jointly take responsibility for any errors that remain. Matlock is compiling similar indices for other world areas.

The Trait Index refers primarily to books, monographs, and articles that contain original data on belief in human reincarnation and its variants in North America. Unpublished reports (for example, conference papers) with the exception of Ph.D. theses, and fieldnotes in repositories are not included. Secondary sources are included only if they are either compilations of primary sources or provide reliable accounts of primary sources that may be difficult to locate. Sources that refer to the reincarnation of animals as animals are not included.

Although based on a reasonably comprehensive and systematic review of the anthropological literature on North America, the trait index should not be considered definitive with regard to the sources available for any given society. We have included references only to sources we have been able to obtain, and we are aware of some others that we have not been able to locate or for which we have not had time to search. Where English translations of works originally published in other languages are available, we have preferred to cite these while listing the original in the References. Except in the case of translations, the date of publication given is the original date of publication, although the date of reprinting, when known to us, may be listed in the citation as well.

Readers may know of yet other sources, or have knowledge of reincarnation beliefs from their personal acquaintance with Amerindian peoples, and if so we would like to hear from them.

Matlock wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Deirdre Fahy and Mills, the assistance of Jody Schubert and Kristen Weiss. We are grateful to them and to the Interlibrary Loan divisions of the libraries of our respective institutions (Hunter College of the City University of New York and the University of Virginia), without whom our job would have been even more considerable than it was.

Organization of the Trait Index

The trait index is organized under thirteen subheadings, which roughly correspond to culture areas, which, in turn, generally refer to geographical areas. The subheadings are: Inuit, Eskimo, and Aleut; Pacific Drainage/Yukon Subarctic; Mackenzie Drainage Subarctic; Shield, Mackenzie Borderlands, and Eastern Subarctic; Northwest Coast; Plateau; Great Basin; Plains; Prairies; East; California; and Southwest. Cultures for which we have found information on reincarnation or related beliefs are listed under these headings, again arranged geographically. The number preceding the society corresponds to the numbers on the maps, which show the geographical location of the society. (See also Key to Numbers in Maps.)

When the culture is listed by Murdock in the sixth edition of *Outline of World Cultures* (New Haven: HRAF Press, 1983), the alphanumeric OWC code is supplied. When greater specificity was desired, we added a letter to the OWC code; when no code is given, the culture is not listed by Murdock. The OWC codes are the name of the society.

Sources for each culture are listed in alphabetical order. Citations refer to the References that follow the Trait Index. We have usually supplied page numbers, especially if the source is a book. However, page numbers are not given if the majority of the citation is about reincarnation.

Explanation of Codes Used in the Trait Index

Codes relating to human reincarnation and its variants are grouped into five categories. The first category indicates the type of report (belief, case, oral tradition describing the phenomenon, or secondary discussion or report of a primary source); the second indicates the type of belief (human to human, human to animal, for example); the third notes signs used in identifying reincarnations; the fourth covers beliefs about the reincarnation process; and the fifth indicates social practices widely related to the belief (naming or mortuary

practices, kinship terminology, child-rearing practices), where these are explicitly linked to reincarnation. The Key to Codes below is followed by an explanation of the codes.

Key to Codes

Type of Report

B = Information on beliefs only
C = Case or example cited
O = Reincarnation mentioned in the oral tradition (myths)
D = Discussion (secondary treatment, analysis)

Type of Belief

R = Reincarnation belief present (human-to-human rebirth)
T = Transmigration belief present (human-to-animal rebirth)
M = Metempsychosis belief present (human-to-animal-to-human cycle)
GS = Guardian spirit (inherited; assigned at birth)
NS = Name soul

Signs used in Identifying Reincarnations

AD = Announcing dreams
BM = Birthmarks or birth defects
PS = Other physical signs
BS = Behavioural signs
RC = Recognitions (spontaneous)
RT = Recognition tests
VC = Verbal claims
IC = Memories of interlife interval claimed
SI = Shamans make identifications

Beliefs about the Reincarnation Process

CO = Reincarnation for children only
CE = Reincarnation for children especially, but not exclusively
SE = Reincarnation for Shamans especially, but not exclusively
SO = Reincarnation for some only (other than children, shamans)
SF = Reincarnation limited to same family, lineage, clan, etc.
CS = Cross-sex reincarnation

CR = Composite reincarnation (two or more souls in one body)
DR = Divided reincarnation (soul reborn in more than one body)
IL = Beliefs about proper intermission length
NI = Beliefs about number of incarnations
PR = Planned returns possible
MR = Pre-mortem reincarnation
SA = Shamans may or must assist in reincarnation process

Related Practices

MP = Mortuary practices related to reincarnation
NP = Naming practices related to reincarnation
KT = Kinship terms related to reincarnation
CP = Child-rearing practices reflect reincarnation belief

Qualifying Codes

? = Ambiguity or lack of clarity regarding trait
* = Trait stated to be irregular feature of culture, not shared by all persons
a = Stated absence of trait

Explanation of Codes

Type of Report

Four types of report are distinguished:

B Beliefs are mentioned, but without illustration; used in contrast with C and O, and in association with the codes listed under Type of Belief or Case and Methods of Identifying Reincarnations, below.

C Beliefs are illustrated by cases or signs purporting to show reincarnation. Details of these are coded under Methods of Identifying Reincarnation, below.

O Reincarnation is represented in the oral tradition (for example, myths, legends), but no direct reference to rebirth beliefs is given.

D Reincarnation beliefs are considered in discussion or secondary sources, but unless B, C, or O are coded, the author does not draw on his or her own fieldwork.

Type of Belief or Case

Five traits appear under this heading, which is used to clarify traits coded under

Type of Report, above. The traits are not mutually exclusive, and a source may mention more than one.

R Reincarnation is stated to be present or is unambiguously represented (for example, in myth). Reincarnation refers to the rebirth of human beings (or some spiritual part of them) in other human beings.

T Transmigration is stated to be present or is unambiguously represented (for example, in myth). Transmigration refers to the rebirth of human beings (or some spiritual part of them) as animals, or the rebirth of animals as human beings, but not both (cf. "metempsychosis," below).

M Metempsychosis is stated to be present or is unambiguously represented (for example, in myth). Metempsychosis refers to a cycle of one or more transmigrations before rebirth in human form, such as animal to human to animal or human to animal to human rebirth.

GS Inherited Guardian Spirits are stated to be present or are unambiguously represented. Inherited guardians are acquired at birth, in contrast to acquired guardians, which first appear later in life, for example, in a vision trance during puberty seclusion.

NS Name souls are stated to be present or are unambiguously represented. Name souls combine names and souls in an intimate association such that one implies the other. Like inherited guardian spirits, name souls are acquired at or shortly after birth.

Signs of Reincarnation

Ten methods of identifying the person (often a deceased relative) reborn in an infant or child are coded. More than one method has been reported for many cultures. Many signs may be used in identification either at birth or later in the child's life.

AD Announcing dreams are dreams had by a woman, or someone close to her, during or around the time she is pregnant, in which the identity of the person to be reborn in her child is indicated.

BM Birthmarks or birth defects are distinguished from the more general category of physical signs (PS), described below.

PS Physical signs other than birthmarks or birth defects (BM), such as physical resemblance, are cited as reasons for asserting reincarnation. This is also a residual category, for use when the type of physical sign is not explicit.

BS Behavioural signs, such as a child's acting in a certain way reminiscent of a deceased person, are used to identify the person it reincarnates.

RC Spontaneous recognitions occur when a child spontaneously recognizes persons or places connected with the life of another person, usually a deceased one.

RT Recognition tests. A child is presented with a series of articles or persons with the expectation that he or she will recognize those related to the life of another person, usually a deceased one.

VC Verbal claims are made to remember events from the life of a deceased person.

IC Interlife memory claims are claims to remember events from between death in a previous life and birth in the present one. Claimed intrauterine memories are *not* included here.

SI Shamanic identification. Shamans or other specialists are called upon to identify the person reborn in the child. This trait may be used in association with any of the others.

Beliefs about the Reincarnation Process

Twelve beliefs about the process of reincarnation are coded. The first three codes deal with *who* may be reincarnation, the next eight codes with *how* the reincarnation process is held to occur, and the last code with the role of the shaman in facilitating reincarnation.

CO Reincarnation is mentioned for children only.

CE Reincarnation is mentioned especially but not exclusively for children.

SE Reincarnation is reserved especially if not exclusively for shamans or similar cultural figures.

SO Reincarnation is reserved for some categories of persons only (for example, warriors or persons who have died violent deaths), exclusive of children (CE) and shamans (SE).

SF Reincarnation is regularly into same family, lineage, clan, etc.

CS Cross-sex reincarnation is mentioned.

CR Composite reincarnation is reported. Composite reincarnation refers to the simultaneous reincarnation of more than one ancestral soul in the same body. Composite reincarnation may be brought about through guardian spirits (GS) and name souls (NS) as well as reincarnating souls (B, C).

DR Divided reincarnation is reported. Divided reincarnation refers to the simultaneous reincarnation of a single ancestral soul in the bodies of two or more different individuals. Divided reincarnation may involve inherited guardian spirits (GS) and name souls (NS) as well as reincarnating souls (B, C).

IL Beliefs about appropriate length of interlife interval are reported.

NI Beliefs about the appropriate or possible number of incarnations are reported.

PR Planned reincarnation are reported. Planned reincarnation are those in which a person, before death, predicts his or her rebirth as a child of a specific woman or into a particular family.

TR Pre-mortem reincarnation is possible. Pre-mortem rebirth refers to the transfer of the reincarnating soul (B, C), inherited guardian spirit (GS), or name-soul (NS) to a child or other living individual before the death of the donor.
SA Shamans may or must assist in the reincarnation process.

Related Social Practices

Four practices associated with reincarnation are coded.
MP Mortuary practices are linked to reincarnation.
NP Naming practices are linked to reincarnation.
KT Use of kinship terminology is linked to reincarnation (for example, through skewing to apply to a child the kin term appropriate to the person it is identified as having been).
CP Child-rearing practices are linked to reincarnation (for example, children are not disciplined because they are thought to be elders reborn).

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